The Bangladesh Liberation War, the Sheikh Mujib Regime, and Contemporary Controversies

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Printed in the United States of America *Dedicated to the memory of my mother, Begum Anwara Chowdhury, and my motherland, Bangladesh—two of the closest companions of my heart and mind*

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Preface

Nobody knows about the future, but when it comes to Bangladesh, it seems that most of the people of the country are ambivalent of the past as well. Much of this has to do with constantly changing history of the country's past. Especially throbbing is to see how subjective and idiosyncratic interpretations have crept up into some of the most treasurable moments in the nation's evolution—its birth as an independent nation and the Sheikh Mujib regime that shaped the formative years of the country. Often textbooks change interpretations of the major historical episodes of the country with the change of ruling parties. If times and claims are any guide, even in this age of Internet and globalization, often governments forbid freedom of expression and unfettered research into the country's history through political sanctions and extra-legal means. As a result, the nation's political discourse remains sharply divided, and even scholars routinely brand each other as "boot-lickers," "political pawns," "sycophants," and so on. This study comes largely as a result of such frustrations.

I had been an eye-witness to the birth and birth-pangs of Bangladesh liberation war and the Mujib regime that followed. As a teenager at that time, I did not always completely understood the full ramifications of many of the events and developments of the period. Unfortunately, the more I read the relevant literature over the course of time, the more I felt the need for digging into the subject matter myself. I spent countless hours over the course of several years to check relevant literature from around the world, with special attention to the writings of scholars of the Indian subcontinent, in order to produce a well-researched, well-documented, authoritative, and scholarly work on the liberation war and the Mujib regime. How far I have succeeded in achieving my objective is, of course, up to the readers to judge.

Just to give a roadmap, this study has been organized in seven chapters.

Chapter 1 explains the rise of Sheikh Mujib to national prominence in the context of geopolitical developments of the partition of British India and the economic and political policies pursued by Pakistani authorities during 1947–71 period. Chapter 2 focuses on the failure of the tripartite negotiations between top leaders of Pakistan—General Yahya Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Sheikh Mujib, failure of which led to a military crackdown on unarmed civilian population of Dhaka in March 1971, and the liberation war of Bangladesh. Chapter 3 explains how a highly successful guerrilla warfare valiantly fought by the Mukti Bahini, albeit aided by Indian political and military support, liberated the country from Pakistani occupation forces, and thus a new nation called Bangladesh emerged on world map just in nine months. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the major political and economic measures of the Mujib Regime. Chapter 6 sheds light on Mujib's move to one-party rule under the Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL), his assassination and the collapse of his regime, and overall performance of his regime. Chapter 7 focuses on some of the enduring legacies and controversies of the regime that still keep the nation's political discourses sharply divided.

My intellectual debts for this treatise go to many Bangladeshi and foreign scholars cited throughout the study—their insights and discernments have profoundly deepened my understanding of the subject matter. I am also grateful to numerous political leaders, intellectuals, journalists, businessmen, civil and military officials, students, and many others with whom I had opportunities to interact about this study over the years.

Finally, I am grateful to the publisher—the Lexington Books—for publishing the book for global readership. I am especially grateful to its acquisitions editor, Brian Hill, for taking keen interest in this project and to Eric Kuntzman, assistant editor, for guiding me through the manuscript preparation. I also owe special thanks to Anita Singh's team for their excellent copy-editing of the manuscript. At the end, none but I myself am responsible for the views and interpretations expressed in this treatise or for any inaccuracies it may contain.

Forest Hills, New York

Caf Dowlah, PhD.
May 11, 2016

Chapter 1

Sheikh Mujib's Rise to National Prominence

I. INTRODUCTION

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–75), the controversial founding father of Bangladesh, remains a central figure in the nation's tumultuous history even after more than four and a half decades since the country's independence in 1971. There can however be little dispute that if the credit for articulating the grievances of the people of erstwhile East Pakistan against the exploitative and discriminatory policies of united Pakistan (1947–71) and for galvanizing the people for self-determination and eventual independence of the country must be given to one individual, that person must be none but this fiercely nationalistic charismatic leader. At the same time, history also suggests that Mujib displayed vastly different leadership traits in the period after the country's liberation (1972–75) when he ruled the country, compared with the period when he championed the rights of East Pakistani people during the period of united Pakistan.

During the preliberation phase, Mujib used his unique reservoir of charisma and organizational skills adroitly to instill in his people vital penchants required for achieving self-determination and independence. But in the postliberation phase, Mujib's grandiose charisma and indisputable command over his people gradually faded out as his regime suffered from far-reaching ideological vacillations and palpable political fraudulence, and the country smarted from devastating economic malaise. This chapter focuses on Mujib's rise to national prominence during the united Pakistan period.

The chapter is organized as follows: Section 2 provides the historical

background of preliberation Bangladesh by revisiting the partition of British India in 1947 into two separate states called India and Pakistan. Section 3 examines the processes that led to neo-colonization of East Pakistan by West Pakistan during the united Pakistan period. Section 4 looks into the early phase of Mujib's political life. Section 5 explores the six-point formula and the Agartala Conspiracy Case that catapulted Mujib to the national stage of Pakistani politics. Section 6 sheds light on the fall of President Ayub Khan. Section 7 explains the outcome of the 1970 general elections that produced two provincial majorities in Pakistan—Sheikh Mujib's Awami League in East Pakistan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in West Pakistan.

II. THE PARTITION OF BRITISH INDIA

The nation called Pakistan was established in 1947 on the ideological foundation of the so-called "Two-Nations Theory," espoused by its founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948). The "Two-Nations Theory" capitalized on two dominant tendencies in the Muslim mind in British India—Islamic religious affinity and the fear of Hindu domination. Originally conceived by Syed Ahmed Khan in 1873, this theory claimed that the Hindus and Muslims of British India constituted two distinct nations who had nothing in common except the motherland.[1] The theory received further currency in the 1930s when poet Mohammed Iqbal (1876–1938), in his presidential address to the All-India Muslim League session at Allahabad in 1930, postulated religious community rather than geographical territory as the basis for future Muslim and Hindu states in British India (Hasan 1994, 7–8).

Jinnah, who was an ardent champion of Hindu-Muslim unity in his early life, embraced the "Two-Nations Theory" in the early 1930s after concluding that the differences between Hindus and Muslims were irreconcilable, and that the partition of British India along the contours of religious communities was all but inevitable. But while Jinnah insisted on a religion-based nationalism that would establish two separate nations in British India—a Pakistan for the Muslims and a Hindustan for the Hindus, other prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress, such as Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) dismissed Jinnah's theory asserting that India had never been structured around religious solidarities or polarized along communal lines (Nehru 1946, 341–342), and Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), the future founding father of India, doggedly opposed any

“surgical operation” of British India (Jha 2004, 96–105).

Jinnah’s fervent call for a separate Muslim land, however, received staunch support from Muslims throughout British India.[2] As a result, the Muslim League won 75 percent of the Muslim votes in 1945–46 elections across India, and captured 460 of the 533 seats reserved for the Muslims in the central and provincial assemblies (Hasan 1997, 102–103). The people of East Bengal (the geopolitical territory that now constitutes Bangladesh) also vigorously participated in Jinnah’s call for a separate Muslim nation. The Indian Muslim League won a landslide in Bengal by capturing 113 of 119 Muslim seats, and 87 percent of the Muslim votes cast in the election.

Muslims of East Bengal indeed played a dominant role in politics ever since the British East India Company made its inroads into India through Calcutta (now the capital of the West Bengal state of India) by defeating Sirajuddoula the Nawab of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa in 1757. Then, the Indian Muslim League, which championed partition of the British India along religious lines, was founded in Dhaka in 1906. Several Muslim leaders from East Bengal, especially A. K. Fazlul Haq (1873–1962), a former chief minister of Bengal; Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani (1880–1976), a former provincial Muslim leader from Assam; and Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy (1892–1962), a former chief minister of Bengal, played critical roles in spearheading the demand for a separate Muslim land in British India. It was Fazlul Haq, widely known as Sher-e-Bangla (Tiger of Bengal), who on March 23, 1940, moved the historic Lahore Resolution which served as the foundation of the Pakistan movement.

The Lahore Resolution called for a grouping of Muslim majority areas of Northwestern and Eastern zones of India as “independent states”—apparently seeking to establish two or more Muslim states, one in the northeast, comprising Bengal and Assam to be known as Bangastan, and another in the south, comprising Hyderabad, to be called Osmanistan, and so on (Roy 1994, 102–132).[3] Eventually, however, Jinnah insisted that the “Pakistan demand” as envisioned by the Lahore Resolution stood for a singular state for Muslims as opposed to any scheme of undivided India (Moore 1994, 160–197). Accordingly, the Muslim League Council, held in New Delhi in 1946, changed the wording of the Lahore Resolution from “independent states” to “one Muslim state.”

It was the then chief minister of Bengal, H. S. Suhrawardy, another Bangalee Muslim leader, who made the declaration, which read as follows: “The Zones comprising Bengal and Assam in the NorthEast, and the Punjab, the North-West

Frontier Province (NWFP), Sind and Baluchistan in the North-West of India … be constituted into one sovereign independent state and … two separate constitution-making bodies be set up for Pakistan and Hindustan” (Pirzada, 1970). In the elections on the partition of British India, held in 1945–46, the Muslim League won almost all Muslim constituencies in British India (Tinker 1962, 31–35), and on August 14, 1947, the British India was partitioned into two independent nations—India and Pakistan.

III. NEOCOLONIAL POLICIES OF WEST PAKISTAN

The Political Undercurrents

As history has shown, the two new nations, Pakistan and India, born out of the womb of British India the same night with extraordinarily dissimilar ideological and political foundations, charted strikingly different paths for their futures as well. India chose to tread a secular path in order to suppress religious differences, while Pakistan was firmly grounded in religious affinities. Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, however, never sought to establish a religious or fundamentalist Pakistan. His plea for Pakistan was a "secular quest conducted at the political level and not a theological cresentade to build a 'homeland' for all the Muslims of the world or even India" (Mathur 1977, 438). In seeking a separate homeland for Muslims, his primary motive was the other pillar of the "Two-Nations Theory"—abolition of Hindu domination—and he sought a state in which religion would be irrelevant in the conduct of political life of the new state.

In the very first speech as governor-general of Pakistan, he told the country's central legislature, "You may belong to any religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the state" (Tinker 1962, 72). Even in his presidential address to the Lahore Convention in 1940, Jinnah asserted, "It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of Islam and Hinduism. They are not religions in strict sense of the word, they are in fact different and distinct social orders" (Sayeed 1967, 40). Obviously, his emphasis was on different and distinct social orders, not on religious differences. Jinnah, however, could not enshrine his vision into a reality for the nation—he passed away in 1948, within a year of the country's independence.

Pakistan, however, failed to emerge as one nation. Its two wings—East and West Pakistan—had a "common religion, a short history, and the same central government," but nothing else in common (Auspitz, Marglin and Papaneck, 1971). The peoples of East and West Pakistan spoke different languages (Urdu in the West, Bengali in the East), ate different foods (meat and grain in the West, fish and rice in the East), and had opposite cultures; the Punjabis were stolid types who preferred soldiering and government, while the Bengalese were volatile and loved politics and literature (Schanberg 1971).

As subsequent political developments showed, an irremediable fault line conditioned the relationships between the two wings of Pakistan from the very inception of the nation's birth. "The Bangalees were short, dark and agile, racially a part of the masses of Asia. The Punjabis, in whose veins flowed thirty centuries of conquerors, were scions of the steppes of Central Asia, and their

Aryan features bore the traces of Turkestan, Russia, Persia, and the deserts of Arabia," observed Collins and Lapierre (1975, 126).

On the other hand, as historical developments suggest, before Lord Curzon, British viceroy to India, divided Bengal in communal lines in 1905, the Muslims of Bengal never had a separate national identity or geopolitical territory of their own. It was the division of Bengal in 1905 that marked the first occasion in the entire history of the Muslims of Bengal when they could claim a distinct geopolitical territory of their own—kind of provincial nationhood. This semblance of nationhood also evaporated quickly when under pressure from the Hindus of West Bengal and to the utter dismay of Bengal Muslims the British government reintegrated Bengal in 1911.

The division of Bengal, although for a very brief period, helped arouse Muslim political consciousness in East Bengal. Many Bengali Muslims viewed the partition as a recognition of their cultural and political separation from the Hindu-majority population (Heitzman and Worden, 1989). Then with the founding of the Muslim League in 1906, Dhaka was instantly elevated "from provincial backwaters to a new status of capital of the Muslim-majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam" (Wolpert 1982, 27). British rulers, however, rescinded the division as Hindus, who had "disproportionately high participation in the British Indian establishment" and by then served as presidents of the Indian Congress for 12 of its first 32 years opposed the division (Gordon 1994, 282).[4]

A second moment of opportunity for the Bengal Muslims to assert a separate nationhood came with the Lahore Resolution—now a separate state for themselves could be demanded in case the Resolution meant "Independent States," rather than "independent states." It is, therefore, not surprising that the Muslim League Council's resolution of 1946, which called for one independent Muslim state instead of several states, provoked sharp reaction from Fazlul Haq, who accused Jinnah of "betrayal" of the letter and spirit of the Lahore Resolution (Roy 1994, 111).

The Lahore Resolution, however, did contribute to the rapid growth of political consciousness in East Bengal.[5] Between the twin pillars of the "Two-Nations Theory," to the Muslims of East Bengal the issue of Hindu domination was clearly more crucial than the issue of religious affinity. As early as in 1929, Fazlul Haq floated a new political party—called the Krishak Praja Party (Party of Peasant Subjects—KPP)—to champion the plight of the peasants (most of whom were Muslims), who allegedly were oppressed by the landlords (most of

whom were Hindus). East Bengal's opposition to Hindu domination, especially of Hindu landed elites, indeed, came as a great predicament for Jinnah as 163 of 503 members of the Indian Muslim League Council in 1940 were landlords (Sayeed 1967, 207).

On June 20, 1947, the Muslim-dominated East Bengal emerged as the eastern wing of Pakistan while the Hindu-dominated West Bengal sided with India. The division of Bengal was approved by a joint session of the Bengal Legislative Assembly when 90 members voted to stay with India, an overwhelming 126 members voted to join Pakistan. The votes were cast in Hindu-Muslim communal lines, but Fazlul Haq and Jyoti Basu, who later became chief minister of the West Bengal state of India, abstained (Gordon 1994, 316).

By joining Pakistan, East Bengal, however, lost Calcutta, the nerve center of Bengal, where "virtually all the wealth of eastern Bengal was concentrated" (Ziring 1998, 59). Although about 25 percent of Calcutta's population was Muslims, Lord Mountbatten refused to hold a plebiscite to determine the wishes of the people of Calcutta on the issue of Partition of Bengal. Thus, with an overwhelming majority of the Muslim population, East Bengal—the poor, rural, former eastern hinterland of Calcutta—began its journey as an isolated and enfeebled part of Pakistan.

That an overwhelming majority of the Muslims of Bengal did not hesitate to join the bandwagon of religious affinity in order to spearhead the Pakistan movement and that their support to the cause of Pakistan came at the expense of undermining of their own language and culture, historical traditions, political orientation, and economic standing, do indicate that lacking their own national identity, the Muslims of Bengal embraced the "Two-Nations Theory" as well as the Lahore Resolution as a stopgap measure, largely as a marriage of convenience.[6]

Evidently, all three major leaders of East Bengal—Haq, Bhashani, and Suhrawardy—whom Dowlah (2009) describes as the "Magnificent Trio" of Bengal politics, had serious problems with the Indian Muslim League as well as with Jinnah's leadership. In 1937, Haq was able to form the provincial government of Bengal with the blessings of the Indian Muslim League, although his relationship with Jinnah remained extremely tenuous. Haq not only wanted to "escape the clutches of the Muslim League and the discipline of Jinnah," but was also apprehensive of "the control of Urdu-speaking Muslim businessmen" (Gordon 1994, 296–297). Moreover, his political party—the KPP—demanded abolition of the landlord system without compensation, which the Muslim

League vehemently opposed. Haq eventually moved the Lahore Resolution in 1940, apparently keeping his eye open to the possibility of an independent Bangalee nation someday later (Pirzada, 1970). It was not a surprise that in 1946 Haq reacted sharply when Jinnah amended the Lahore Resolution providing for a single Independent State rather than several states for Indian Muslims and abstained from voting when Bengal Legislative Assembly voted on the division of Bengal.

Suhrawardy's relationship with the Muslim League, for that matter with Jinnah, was all but tenuous as well. The Indian Muslim League, led by Jinnah, accused him of conspiring to establish a sovereign united Bengal with the support of West Bengal Congress leader Sarat Chandra Bose, elder brother of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose. Suhrawardy, in fact, announced the plan in a press conference on April 27, 1947, for founding a united and independent Bengal, and on May 20, 1946, reached a tentative agreement with M. K. Gandhi for establishing such a state. The move, however, fell flat as Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel—two other prominent leaders of the Indian Congress—vetoed the idea arguing that such independence would mean domination of the country by the Muslim League and sooner or later the majority Muslim population of Bengal opting to join Pakistan (Jaffrelot 2004, 42–43).

Historical records suggest that Lord Mountbatten also quietly encouraged Bangalee politicians, both Hindus and Muslims, to support "the sixty-five million Hindus and Moslems of Bengal to join into one viable country, with the great seaport of Calcutta as their capital." He even solicited Jinnah's support to Suhrawardy's proposal "for keeping Bengal united at the price of remaining outside Pakistan." Apparently Jinnah responded positively: "What is the use of Bengal without Calcutta; they had much better remain united and independent" (Moore 1994, 193).

But in the immediate aftermath of the partition of British India, Suhrawardy was blamed for igniting the Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta (known as the great Calcutta Killing) that cost approximately half-a-million lives of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs (Pandey 1969, 184). Then, although Suhrawardy was a sitting member of Pakistan's Constituent Assembly, he was denied entry into Pakistan, stripped of Assembly membership, and forced to give up his primary membership of the Muslim League.

Subsequently, Haq and Moulana Bhashani also had to give up their memberships of the Muslim League. Both these leaders had serious "philosophical and practical differences" with the Muslim League as they were

committed to representing all Bangalees, Muslims as well as Hindus, and "sensed the need to establish cordial relations with India, especially with that other segment of the Bengali family in western Bengal" (Ziring 1998, 78). In 1949, within two years of Pakistan's independence, these dissident Bangalee leaders, Bhashani and Suhrawardy, broke up with the Pakistan Muslim League by launching a new political party called the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League (EPAML). In 1954, within seven years of Pakistan's independence, they were joined by Suhrawardy to launch the United Front, capitalizing on the federal character of the Lahore Resolution (1940).

The Magnificent Trio claimed that the Lahore Resolution called for at least two Independent States for Indian Muslims, not independent states, as claimed by Jinnah. They also questioned the validity of the 1946 amendment to the Lahore Resolution, which sought to establish one independent state for all Muslims of British India (Jahan 1994, 22). Thus, within a few years of the partition of British India, cracks within the Pakistani project began to surface when genuine leaders of East Bengal Muslims—the Magnificent Trio—Haq, Bhashani, and Suhrawardy—were systematically sidelined, while some other leaders of East Bengal with little or no popular support, such as Khawaja Nazimuddin and Nurul Amin, emerged as allies of West Pakistani leadership. With the passing of every year, the cracks widened farther and farther, imperiling the very foundation of the Pakistani project.

The Economic and Social Crosscurrents

Pakistan emerged as a geographical absurdity—an independent nation with its two wings separated by around 1,200 miles of hostile India in between. Aside from such an artificial construction, it was a country of refugees. Thanks to massive cross-migrations propelled by ill-thought out demarcation lines of India and Pakistan, in 1947 one-tenth of Pakistani population were refugees. More than 700,000 refugees took shelter in East Pakistan, while the number was 6.3 million in West Pakistan—a fifth of its total population of 33.7 million. Then, it was essentially a rural country—"a slice of India which had drifted away"—with a mere 23 percent of the area and 18 percent of the population of British India, inheriting no more than 10 percent of the industrial potential (Jaffrelot 2004, 2–17).

Worse still, the physical distance not only made mass communication between the two wings of Pakistan next to impossible, but also made it extremely difficult to derive common benefits from public investments in education, culture—investments made in one part of the country had absolutely no spillover effects on the other (Jahan 1994, 38–50). Then, as if the religion-based nationalism and the great physical distance were not enough, West Pakistani rulers lost no time in instigating widespread anti-West Pakistan sentiment in East Bengal by declaring Urdu as the state language of Pakistan in 1948. It was an absurd proposition to begin with. Urdu was, in fact, spoken by less than seven percent of Pakistani population, while Bengali was the mother tongue for more than 55 percent of the population.[7] It was not a surprise that the people of East Bengal saw a nefarious design to subjugate them by imposing Urdu as the sole state language of Pakistan. Worse still, some West Pakistani leaders and scholars added salt to injury by claiming that being subject to pervasive influence of Hindu authors and cultures for several centuries, Bengali language "carried blood of inferior races," and was a "language of idolatry and of cowards" (Gordon 1994, 284).

Soon the people of Bengal organized a massive movement against this design, and at the climax of the movement, on February 21, 1952, several students were killed as Pakistani authorities fired on the demonstrators on the streets of Dhaka. This movement eventually forced the Pakistani authorities to give up the agenda of establishing Urdu as the exclusive state language, and in 1954 both Bengali and Urdu were recognized as the state languages of Pakistan.[8] The Bengali Language Movement, however, had far-reaching consequences—it constituted not only the first formidable onslaught on the Islam-based nationalism of

Pakistan, but also culminated into the bloody disintegration of Pakistan itself.

Then, overwhelming evidence suggests that West Pakistani rulers made concerted efforts to use East Pakistan as a captive market for industrial goods produced in West Pakistan, and to develop their part of the country at the expense of East Pakistan, essentially subjugating East Bengal into "a second colonial era" (Faaland and Parkinson 1976, 7). Time magazine (August 2, 1971) pointed out that, from the very beginning, East Pakistan "got the short end of the bargain in Pakistan." West Pakistan "regularly devours three-quarters of all foreign aid and 60 percent of export earnings … with Panjabi-Pathan power elite in control for two decades, East Pakistan has been left a deprived agricultural backwater." The evidence of exploitation manifested in wide-ranging areas, in budgetary allocations, industrial and investment policies, agricultural development policies, trade and foreign aid, and in administrative and military appointments (Dowlah 2009, 39–49).

To begin with, although East Pakistan was home to the majority of the people of Pakistan, the country's capital was established in Karachi,[9] which led to an "overwhelming concentration of governmental authority in the hands of West Pakistanis" and to the subordination of the economic as well as the political interests of the people of East Bengal (Masson, Dorfman and Marglin 1971, 6). Although as a relatively less developed part of the country East Pakistan deserved greater public investment—its share in public development expenditures was as low as 20 percent during 1950–55, 26 percent during 1955–60, and 32 percent during 1960–65 period. The highest share East Pakistan ever received was 36 percent during the third five-year plan (1965–70).

Worse still, between 1955 and 1970, over 54 percent of central government budgetary expenditures went to defense—almost all of which was spent in West Pakistan (Rizvi 1974). In 1955, only 14 of 894 high-ranking officers in the Pakistani army, and only 7 of 593 high-ranking officers in the Pakistani Navy were Bangalees. In 1965, the Pakistani army had only 300 officers of Bengali origin out of 6,000 (Jaffrelot 2004, 48–51). During the same period, civil administration received 19 percent of public expenditures, nearly 70 percent of which went to West Pakistan; there was not even one secretary general of a ministry from East Pakistan until 1965 (Chowdhury 1972, 12–13).

Obviously, such budgetary policies resulted in dramatic improvements in West Pakistan's economy. While in 1949–50, East Pakistan had larger gross domestic product (GDP) than West Pakistan, by 1969–70, it ended up with only two-thirds of West Pakistan's GDP. While per capita income of East Pakistan barely

changed during the entire period, that of West Pakistan increased by 150 percent. In 1949–50, East Pakistan imported only about Rs. 272 million worth of goods from West Pakistan, but by 1968/69, its imports from West Pakistan increased by 661 percent. Between 1950 and 1970, West Pakistan received 77 percent of the total central government expenditures, 55 percent of total development expenditures, 75 percent of total foreign economic assistance, 78 percent of private investment, 69 percent of total import expenditures, and 60 percent of development financing (Singh *et al.* 1999, 35). As a result, there had been an estimated net transfer of resources from East to West Pakistan by the amount of $2.6 billion during 1948–68 period (Masson Dorfman and Marglin 1972).

Such a massive scale of transfer took place through various ways and means. Although East Pakistan fetched the lion's share of the country's export earnings by exporting jute, hides, and tea, Pakistani authorities patronized industrialization in West Pakistan often by diverting foreign exchanges earned by East Pakistan. As East Pakistan served as a captive market for West Pakistan's industrial goods, even inefficient industries of West Pakistan prospered due to discretionary tariff and quota policies. Then, during the entire period of united Pakistan, East Pakistan received only 42 percent of total investment resources of Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC), 20 percent of the resources of Pakistan Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation (PICIC), 24 percent of resources of Pakistan Industrial Development Bank (PIDB), and 12 percent of the resources of the House Building Financing Corporation (HBFC).

Worse still, many of the East Pakistani businesses that received these funds were owned by West Pakistanis, and thus, benefits actually accrued to East Pakistan could be much lower than official projections. Such discriminatory industrialization and investment-financing strategies led to huge concentration of wealth in the hands of 22 infamous West Pakistani families, who controlled approximately 66 percent of the country's industrial assets, 70 percent of insurance funds, and 80 percent of bank assets (Chowdhury 1998, 38; Ahmed 1979, 149).[10]

West Pakistan also received huge sums of governmental resources for agricultural development, such as irrigation projects, fertilizers, and agricultural mechanization, while East Pakistan, although predominantly an agricultural land, received fewer loans, less funding for irrigation, and fewer incentives for fertilizer application or agricultural mechanization. As a result, 82 percent of power generation, 66 percent of fertilizer distribution, and 92 percent of tractors

distributed by the Pakistan government went to West Pakistan (Dowlah 2009, 42).

In 1949–50, East Pakistan imported only about Rs. 272 million worth of goods from West Pakistan, but by 1968–69, its imports from West Pakistan soared to Rs. 1.8 billion. During the same period, West Pakistan's imports from East Pakistan increased from Rs. 62 million to Rs. 966 million. East Pakistan mainly imported rice and wheat, cotton textiles, oilseeds, raw cotton, and tobacco from West Pakistan, while it exported tea, jute textiles, and paper to West Pakistan. Remarkably, the bulk of East Pakistan's exports to West Pakistan during this period was manufactured goods—almost 85 percent. In fact, interwing trade between West Pakistan and East Pakistan for the entire period of 1947–69 was tilted in favor of West Pakistan, when East Pakistan's exports to West Pakistan totaled $1.74 billion, while West Pakistan's exports to East Pakistan totaled $3.31 billion. There had been not a single year, between 1947 and 1969 when West Pakistan did not have a trade deficit with East Pakistan.[11]

As Table 1.1 indicates, the scenario had been quite depressing in respect to a host of factors during the united Pakistan period. For example, during 1947–70, 55 percent of Pakistan's export earnings were earned by East Pakistan, but East Pakistan's share in the country's imports was 31 percent only. Of the total development expenditures of the country, only 45 percent went to East Pakistan although it had majority of the population. Similarly, East Pakistan received only 20 percent of the share of development finance allocations from state agencies like the House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC), the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP), the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP), and the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Insurance Corporation (PICIC). When it came to foreign economic assistance commitments and utilization, East Pakistan's shares were 25 percent and 30 percent, respectively. Similarly, East Pakistan received only 23 percent in the share of government revenue spending during 1950–70 period, while it had a share of 22 percent in private investment during 1963–68 period.

Until the late 1950s, East Pakistan's exports were roughly on a par with those of West Pakistan, but since the early 1960s, with industrialization constituting an ever greater share of the country's export basket, East Pakistan's share in export earnings increased rapidly. In fact, since 1957–58, West Pakistan's export earnings surpassed that of East Pakistan only in 1967–68 and 1968–69. As East Pakistan maintained huge surplus on foreign accounts and West Pakistan incurred chronic deficits in its foreign trade, East Pakistan's surplus was used

routinely to pay for such deficits. During 1947–70, Pakistan received around $10 billion in economic assistance, including $3 billion in military assistance. Of the $7 billion of economic assistance, $6.44 billion was utilized, of which $1.94 billion (around 30%) went to East Pakistan, $4.11 billion went to West Pakistan (Muhith 1992, 105).

As the discussion above indicates, West Pakistani authorities exploited East Pakistan quite systematically. Khan (1972, 85–86) summarizes three main mechanisms through which Pakistani rulers transferred resources from East Pakistan: (a) by imposing very high effective common external tariff and by directly controlling import entitlement—channeling a large import flow from relatively more industrialized West Pakistan into East Pakistan[12]; (b) by offsetting a part of the resultant interwing trade imbalance by East Pakistan's exports to West Pakistan, and the other part by converting into foreign exchange resources of East Pakistan (East Pakistan's export surplus until the early sixties and its share in foreign aid since then)[13]; and (c) by systematically skewing the exchange rate in order to suppress the prices of West Pakistan's noncompetitive imports from East Pakistan. The values of two of East Pakistan's main exports—tea and paper—were manipulated by maintaining unfavorable foreign exchange rate for these products. Tea was entirely redirected to West Pakistan.

Table 1.1 Aggregate Economic Figures of Pakistan, 1947–70 (in billion rupees, unless otherwise indicated. Numbers in parentheses indicate shares of East Pakistan and West Pakistan)

Indicators	*Pakistan*	*West Pakistan*	*East Pakistan*
Total export earnings	46.6	21.1 (45.3%)	25.5 (54.7%)
Total import expenditures	64.4	44.3 (68.7%)	20.1 (31.3%)
Total development expenditures (1950–70)	44.3	24.4 (55%)	19.9 (45%)
Development finance allocation*	6.31	3.82 (60%)	2.49 (20%)
Total foreign economic assistance commitments	7.64	5.73 (75%)	1.9 (25%)
Utilization of foreign economic assistance	6.44	4.5 (70%)	1.94 (30%)
Total revenue spending (1950–70)	66.32	51.25 (77%)	15.07 (23%)
Private investment (1963–68)	17.57	13.67 (78%)	3.9 (22%)

Notes: *Loans sanctioned by various development finance institutions, such as the House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC), the Agricultural Development Bank of Pakistan (ADBP), the Industrial Development Bank of Pakistan (IDBP), and the Pakistan Industrial Credit and Insurance Corporation (PICIC).
Source: Author's compilation from multiple sources.

Economic disparities of Pakistani ruling cliques were also accompanied by

discriminatory measures in the areas of social, administrative, political, and military policies. Between 1947 and 1970, percentages of the population enrolled in college and technical education increased by 675 percent in West Pakistan, compared with 320 percent in East Pakistan. At the same time, the percentage of students receiving medical and engineering education increased by 425 percent in West Pakistan but by 300 percent in East Pakistan, and the number of scholars increased 30 times in West Pakistan compared with only 5 times in East Pakistan. The number of primary schools actually declined in East Pakistan during this period, while it increased by 350 percent in West Pakistan. In the health sector, with a population of 75 million, East Pakistan had 7,600 doctors, whereas West Pakistan, with a population of 55 million, had 12,400. Similarly, West Pakistan had 26,000 hospital beds, while East Pakistan had only 6,000 (Dowlah 2009, 44–48).

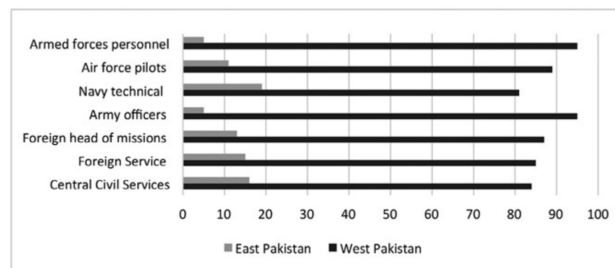


Figure 1.1 East Pakistan's Representation in Pakistan Government Services (in percent)

Such disparity pronounced in government employment as well (see Figure 1.1). East Pakistan had a 16 percent share in the country's elite civil service, called the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP).[12] In 1955, all 19 secretaries of the central government were from West Pakistan. In subordinate ranks—joint secretary, deputy secretary, and undersecretary—East Pakistan had a share of 7.5 percent.[13] There were 60 foreign heads of missions from West Pakistan, but only 9 from East Pakistan. More than 90 percent of army personnel of Pakistan were recruited from West Pakistan: West Pakistan had half a million, East Pakistan, only 20,000. By 1969, out of 20 secretaries of the central government, only three were from East Pakistan. Also, among a total of 35 officers at the ranks of major general to general in Pakistan, only one was from East Pakistan (Singh *et al.* 1999, 15–22).

Overall, marks of exploitation and disparities were so stark that the Masson, Dorfman and Marglin (1971, 5) arrived at the following conclusion: "Since the formation of the state of Pakistan 24 years back, the East Bengalis have derived

little benefit from the association other than a limited sense of security that the Hindu landlords would not be able to return and repossess the land." The real cause of the rupture in Pakistan in March 1971, as Chowdhury (1972, 21) observes, was "the continuous exacerbation, and not progressive reconciliation, of the long-standing differences—racial, cultural, economic, political and administrative—between its two wings." Thus, while the Indians and the West Pakistanis attained independence in 1947, the Bangalee-Muslims of East Bengal had to struggle an additional two-and a-half decades to reach the same benchmark. They, indeed, achieved independence twice—first from the British rulers, and then from West Pakistan (Mallick and Husain 1992, 551). While success of the "Two Nation's Theory" led to the establishment of Pakistan, failure of the same theory led to the establishment of Bangladesh (Ahmed 2004, 23).

IV. THE EARLY POLITICAL LIFE OF MUJIB

By any measure, rise of Mujib came as a spectacular phenomenon in Pakistani politics. Prior to his rise, the grievances of the people of East Pakistan found expressions in the voices of Fazlul Haq, H. S. Suhrawardy, and Moulana Bhashani—the Magnificent Trio, but the voice of Mujib was so prominent and provocative, so unique and so overriding that it overshadowed all others and eventually emerged as the rallying voice of his nation. Mujib's political predispositions were also extraordinarily different from those who represented the country with the explicit or tacit blessings of Pakistan's ruling cliques, on the one hand, and from those who genuinely championed the rights of self-determination of the people of East Pakistan, on the other.

While pro-Pakistani elements stood for Islamic values and for sharing of power and privileges under a united Pakistan, Mujib's political pointers were unmistakably and unambiguously geared against the Pakistani ruling clique itself. While the politics of the Magnificent Trio revolved around the agenda of self-determination for the people of East Pakistan, and remained largely within the orbits of the Pakistani project, Mujib's political efforts centered explicitly on the emerging middle class of East Pakistan who found the very existence of Pakistan at odds with their rising economic interests and political aspirations. Mujib outshined all others in articulating, propagating, and representing the interest of the people of East Pakistan, which he preferred to call Sonar Bangla (Golden Bengal), and as history has shown, the movement that he pioneered

eventually culminated into the disintegration of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh.

At the time of the partition of British India in 1947, Mujib was a 27-year-old college student at the Calcutta Islamia College where he advanced his political career under the shadow of his life-long mentor, H. S. Suhrawardy, a chief minister of Bengal and a fire-brand nationalist leader known for his general discomfort with religion-based politics. The first spark of political inspiration for Mujib, however, came from Sher-e-Bangla Fazlul Haq, another chief minister of Bengal, whom he met at his village school in Gopalgonj a decade ago. By 1940, when Fazlul Haq advanced the Lahore Resolution, which laid the foundation of an independent state for the Muslims of British India, Mujib had already emerged as a prominent student leader representing the progressive group of the Bengal Muslim League led by his mentor Suhrawardy.

In February 1948, immediately after the partition of British India, Mujib returned to Dhaka and got himself admitted to Dhaka University as a student of law.[14] At the same time, he assumed leadership of the newly formed student body called the East Pakistan Muslim Student's League (EPMSL) as its organizing secretary. The new student body represented students who took active part in the Pakistani movement but subsequently become disappointed with Pakistani leadership and sided with the East Pakistan Muslim League (EPAML) founded by Suhrawardy and Moulana Bhashani.

The EPAML soon emerged as a vehicle for the ascendancy of the vernacular elite of East Bengal who championed the aspirations of the nascent middle class demanding larger share in the nation's politics, business, and employment (Jahan 1994, 38–42). The 12-point program of the party included some radical demands, such as establishing Bengali as a state language of Pakistan, autonomy for East Bengal, abolition of the Zamindari system without compensation, and holding of a general election. Two of its main demands—autonomy of East Bengal in light of the Lahore Resolution and establishment of Bengali as a state language of Pakistan—stirred spontaneous response throughout East Bengal. Mujib was at the forefront of the historic language movement, which landed formidable blow to Pakistan's Islam-based nationalism.[15]

In 1953, Mujib replaced Shamsul Hoque as the general secretary of the EPAML when the party also dropped its middle name "Muslim" from its nomenclature by adopting the name Awami League. The name change was also accompanied by a more progressive political platform by the party—it distanced itself from the religion-based nationalism of Pakistan and broadened its appeal

among non-Muslims, especially among the Hindus. Such changes prompted a more conservative faction of the party, led by Abdul Salam Khan, to leave the party.

In 1954, the Awami League joined the United Front, along with Krishak Sramik Party (KSP), Nezam-e-Islam Party (NIP), and Ganatantri Dal (GD) to form an alliance of the Magnificent Trio—Fazlul Haq, Moulana Bhashani, and Suhrawardy. The marriage of convenience of these leading political leaders cemented around “their hatred for the Muslim League and their determination to destroy its role in the province of East Bengal” (Ziring 1998, 154). The 21-point program of the United Front, which underpinned the alliance, was the first broad-based nationalist program in the country which called for full autonomy of East Bengal, establishment of Bengali as a state language of Pakistan, nationalization of the country’s flagship export commodity jute, autonomy of the universities, democratization of administrative laws, and declaration of February 21—the Language Martyrs’ Day—as a national holiday.

To an overwhelming majority of the Bangalees, the United Front’s platform came as a “Charter of Freedom.” As a result, in the 1954 general elections, the United Front won a landslide by capturing 65.6 percent of votes, and 228 of 237 seats allocated to Muslims. The EPAML bagged 143 seats, while PSP bagged 48, NIP bagged 19, and GD bagged 13 seats. On the other hand, the Muslim League—the ruling party of Pakistan—secured less than 27 percent of votes and managed to win only 9 seats. Many of its prominent leaders, including Nurul Amin, the chief minister of East Bengal, lost their seats. In 60 seats, the Muslim League candidates lost their security deposits (Mustafa, 2010). Such a decisive victory of the front not only demonstrated rising consciousness of the peasants and workers, but also came as a historic milestone in the struggle of the people of East Bengal for self-determination and their distaste for religion-based nationalism of Pakistan. More importantly, the victory boosted morale of the forces that envisioned a separate nationhood for East Bengal at some point in the future.

The euphoria of the United Front, however, vanished quickly. The front succeeded in forming a provincial government of East Bengal under the leadership of Fazlul Haq on April 3, 1954. But the Haq government—the first ever popularly elected government in the history of Pakistan—was dismissed on the 56th day of its assumption of power by the then governor-general of Pakistan, Ghulam Mohammad. Fazlul Haq was accused of conspiring to secede East Bengal from Pakistan and causing breakdown of law and order in

prominent industrial centers.[16] The province was placed under "governor's rule," as Pakistan's defense secretary Iskander Mirza assumed the governorship of East Pakistan. Mirza banned all political parties in East Bengal and arrested numerous United Front activists and leaders, including Fazlul Haq and Sheikh Mujib (Afzal 1986, 122).

Obviously, the underlying reason for the dismissal of the United Front government was the virtual wiping out of the Muslim League in East Bengal in the 1954 election—within just seven years of the founding of Pakistan by the party. The industrial riots in Karnaphuli Paper Mills and Adamjee Jute Mills were also prompted by the reprehensible acts on the part of the Pakistani ruling clique. Suharwardy squarely dubbed all acts of industrial violence as a conspiracy of the central government who could not swallow the bitter pill of the United Front success in East Bengal (Mustafa 2010, 22). Subsequently, blaming Pakistani authorities for the nefarious act of dismissal of United Front government, Moulana Bhashani called for independence of East Bengal from Pakistan in his famous "Salaam, Pakistan" (Farewell, Pakistan) speech in 1957 (Ahmed 2012).

Fazlul Haq himself, however, apparently played into the hands of Pakistani rulers. Immediately after assuming power, while on an official visit to Calcutta, a city that he served as a mayor before, an emotionally charged Haq told his audience, "Language proved to be the most important unifying factor in history and the people of two Bengals, bound together on common language, should forget political divisions and feel themselves to be one" (Ray 1968, 98). He even expressed the hope "to remove the artificial barriers that had been created between the two Bengals" and condemned the "political division of the country" (Afzal 1986, 122). At the same time, a New York Times report on May 23, 1954, suggested that Haq was not proposing autonomous status for East Pakistan, but an independent nation of East Pakistan (Chatterjee 2010, 23). Although Haq vehemently denied of making any such statement, the ruling Pakistani oligarchs took the New York Times report, along with his earlier statement in Calcutta, as sufficient to brand him a "traitor."[17]

The short-lived United Front government, however, gave Mujib the first opportunity in his life to serve as a cabinet member—he had a portfolio of agriculture and forestry of the government. Then Mujib served as a cabinet member again in 1956, as minister for industry and commerce for the East Pakistan government led by Ataur Rahman Khan. In 1957, simmering rift between Bhashani, the then president of the Awami League, and Suhrawardy,

the then prime minister of Pakistan, flushed out wide open at the Kagmari Conference in Tangail. The conflict apparently centered on the fact that while the latter pursued a pro-American political course committed to the integrity of Pakistan, the former subscribed to pro-Chinese politics and professed “Islamic Socialism” with a demand for greater autonomy of East Bengal. The confrontation resulted in the departure of the left-leaning leaders from the Awami League. In July, the same year, Bhashani floated a new political party, named as the National Awami Party (NAP), to establish “socialism which does not interfere with religion but stops exploitation of religion” (Franda 1970).

The rift between the two top leaders of the party—Suhrawardy and Bhashani—presented a great opportunity to Mujib for establishing his control over the Awami League. He did so by aligning himself with his life-time mentor Suhrawardy, the sitting prime minister of Pakistan, and by resigning from the Ataur Rahman Khan cabinet (Rashiduzzaman 1970, 580). The following year, in 1958, however, Pakistan came under martial law under Field Marshall Ayub Khan, who banned all political parties and suspended all political activities throughout Pakistan. On top of all, in East Pakistan, Ayub’s hand-picked governor Monaem Khan banned all public meetings, censored the press, controlled radio programs, and banned any broadcast of Tagore songs and imports of books and magazines from West Bengal. In 1964, following the lifting of the ban on political parties, the Awami League was revived with Mujib as the general secretary and Moulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish as the president. In 1966, Mujib assumed the presidency of his party—the Awami League.

V. THE SIX-POINTS FORMULA AND THE AGARTALA CONSPIRACY CASE

Despite all three major leaders of East Bengal fell with Jinnah and the Pakistan Muslim League in the early years of the united Pakistan, evidently the people of East Bengal had no dearth of political representation in the governmental affairs of Pakistan. During 1947–58 period, for example, 2 of the 4 heads of state and 3 of the 7 prime ministers of Pakistan, 27 of the 54 central cabinet members, 84 of 164 members of the national parliament, and over 400 of 900 members of the central and provincial assemblies of Pakistan hailed from East Pakistan (Callard, 1957; Maniruzzaman, 1982).

But such quantitatively impressive representations masked the fact that many

of such leaders failed to ensure East Pakistani people’s right to self-determination or their fair share in Pakistan’s economic pie. Moreover, none of these leaders powerfully challenged the founding principle of Pakistani nationhood based on Islamic affinity between the peoples of East and West Pakistan, not many of them highlighted fundamentally different sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds of the people of East Pakistan (Ahmed, 1979; Chowdhury, 1968; Jahan, 1994; Muhith, 1992). Eventually, the task of galvanizing an effective movement against West Pakistan’s colonial policies as well as brazen exploitation of Muslim religious sentiments squarely felt on the shoulders of Sheikh Mujib.

The Six-Points Formula

Mujib’s ascendancy to national prominence in Pakistani politics came with the launching of the six-point formula at the all-party national convention held in Lahore on February 5–6, 1966. The convention was organized in the immediate aftermath of the first Indo-Pak war (1965) to discuss the ramification of the Tashkent Agreement brokered by Soviet Premier Aleksei Kosygin for immediate disengagement of Indo-Pak military forces and restoration of territorial integrity of both nations. The agreement ignited fierce opposition and resentment throughout Pakistan as Ayub failed to obtain Indian concessions on disputed Kashmir, which was his raison d’être to declare the war in the first place.

On the day of the signing of the agreement in Tashkent, the capital of former Soviet Republic Uzbekistan, Indian prime minister Lal Bahadur Shastri died of massive heart attack and he was succeeded by Indira Gandhi, to whom India’s supremacy was more important than coexistence (Cloughley 2016). Apparently, Ayub was also shaken by the agreement—his “self-confidence had carried him from one pinnacle to another, but the 1965 war had drained him of his pride, raised inner doubts, and caused deep psychological wounds” (Ziring 1998, 303).

The Lahore Convention was attended by over 700 delegates, of which only 21, including Mujib, were from East Pakistan. Apparently, the people of East Pakistan were more concerned with the fact that had there been any Indian military intervention in the eastern part of Pakistan, they would be completely defenseless. Such a fear played out well among the masses as it reignited the fear of Hindu domination, which was a crucial motivating factor for the Muslims of East Bengal to join the Pakistan movement during the British period. But Mujib chose this platform to present his six-point formula, which envisaged a parliamentary government, universal adult franchise, a federal government

responsible for defense and foreign affairs only, separate currencies and state banks for the two wings of Pakistan, and a militia or paramilitary force in East Pakistan.[18] Zulfiker Ali Bhutto (1971, 11), chief of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), who described the six-point as a "veiled Charter for a Confederation which contained the genesis of constitutional secession," had it right—by announcing the program at the Lahore Convention, Mujib thrust himself into the forefront of Pakistani politics.

Coming as it did in the immediate aftermath of the Indo-Pak war and against the backdrop of the political vacuum in East Pakistan resulting from the death of prominent leaders such as Fazlul Haq and Suhrawardy, and also at a time when people throughout Pakistan became increasingly disenchanted with the Ayub regime, the six-point formula received immense support throughout East Pakistan. The program also drew headlines around the world. Several prominent international newspapers, including London Times, The Economist, New York Times, and Herald Tribune, wrote editorials on the program.[19] At the same time, the formula came under fire from almost all political quarters throughout Pakistan, although the criticism was relatively mild and veiled in East Pakistan. On top of that, Pakistani authorities threw Mujib and many other Awami League leaders and activists to prison. On one occasion, on June 7, 1966, more than three dozens of demonstrating political activists were killed on the streets of Dhaka. Considerable controversy still remains about who originally formulated the six-point formula,[20] but as subsequent developments proved, eventually this formula emerged as a make or break for Pakistan.

The Agartala Conspiracy Case

In 1968, Pakistani government implicated Mujib in a sedition case called the Agartala Conspiracy Case accusing him of plotting secession of East Pakistan with military assistance of neighboring India. There were 34 co-accused in the case, including three senior civil servants—Ahmed Fazlur Rahman, Ruhul Quddus, and M. Shamsur Rahman, and nine defense personnel, including Lt. Colonel Muazzem Hossain and Sergeant Zahurul Haq. The government alleged that the accused individuals met with some Indian officials in Agartala, the capital of the Indian state of Tripura, in order to disintegrate Pakistan by establishing an independent government in East Pakistan through an armed revolt with Indian military and financial support.[21]

Mujib was, however, in a Pakistani prison when the conspiracy allegedly took place. His name was not on the case when it was originally framed in 1967, but he was implicated later as the number one accused in the case reportedly at the instance of General Yahya Khan, chief of Pakistan's armed forces (Kapur 1991, 83) and Monaem Khan, governor of East Pakistan, who convinced Ayub to destroy Mujib by implicating him in a pro-Indian plot at a time when anti-Indian sentiment ran high in East Pakistan due to 1965 Indo-Pak war (Jahan 1994, 171).[22] Many people in both parts of the country, however, questioned how Mujib could participate in such a vast conspiracy while being held in a tightly secured prison (Mahmood 1972, 305).

The special tribunal for the case was headed by Justice S. A. Rahman, a non-Bangalee former chief justice of Pakistan Supreme Court, and two Bangalee members, Justice M. R. Khan of Pakistan Supreme Court and Justice Maksumul Hakim of East Pakistan High Court. The government was represented by Manzur Quader, a former foreign minister of Pakistan, and the country's advocate general, T. H. Khan. Mujib was represented by Thomas William, a British lawyer and a member of the British Parliament, Abdus Salam Khan, Ataur Rahman Khan, and some others. The trial took place in a special court established inside the Dhaka Cantonment and the court proceedings were open to the public. The accused were permitted personal lawyers and media were allowed since Pakistani authorities were convinced that public hearings and media reports would destroy Mujib's political career.

The proceedings of the trial lasted about six months, when 4 out of 11 government approvers turned hostile, and some of them testified that they were coerced and tortured by the state to give false evidence. As a result, the tribunal

was compelled to dismiss the charges. The trial thus instead of destroying Mujib, further emboldened his support base. The people of East Pakistan exploded in a mass uprising, resulting in several hundred deaths, burning of numerous houses, and disruption of roads and communications. Then, at the height of the uprising, on February 5, 1968, Sergeant Haq was killed in police custody. Although official reports claimed that police opened fire on him when he and another accused attempted to escape, demonstrators launched violent attacks and ransacked the state guest house where Justice S. A. Rahman and prosecutor Manzur Quadir stayed. They somehow "escaped public wrath by leaving Dhaka without even collecting their personal belongings" (Ahmed 1979, 134).[23]

Eventually, facing mass uprising, the Ayub regime withdrew the conspiracy case altogether and on February 22, 1969, all accused of the conspiracy case, including Mujib, was released from prison unconditionally, which immediately catapulted Mujib into a formidable national leader of entire Pakistan. The phenomenal success of the mass uprising hinged on massive mobilization of the student community of East Pakistan under the banners of 11-point demands formulated by the All-Party Students Committee of Action (SCA), comprised of the East Pakistan Student League (student front of the Awami League), the East Pakistan Students Union (student front of pro-Moscow NAP), and the East Pakistan Students Union (student front of pro-Beijing NAP).

With the student community formally embracing the six-point formula, the Awami League, which had previously represented bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie interests, instantaneously transformed itself into a political platform capable of representing broad-based interests of the entire population of East Pakistan. The combined platform of 6-point-cum-11-point soon emerged as "the rallying point of historical nationalist convulsion" (Ahmed 1991, 25), which succeeded in galvanizing major political streams of East Pakistan, including the leftist and socialist elements, workers, and peasants (Maniruzzaman 1988, 63–65).

On his part, Ayub Khan, however, took the protests against his regime seriously around October–November, 1968, only after witnessing large-scale student agitations in East Pakistan (Rizvi 1974, 193–194). The strength of the agitating students can be gauged from the fact that the pro-Awami League Students League won the student union elections in all five universities and in almost all colleges that had student unions at that time in East Pakistan. At the same time, Ayub also confronted serious political setbacks in West Pakistan as most of the leading politicians viewed the Indo-Pak war (1965) as a humiliating

defeat for Pakistan and his top military generals worried of losing control of national affairs. The generals were also worried of civilian bureaucracy, which wielded increasingly greater power, as well as politicians, who mounted serious opposition to the ruling power (Hasan 1994, 104–105).

Then, deteriorating political situation also brought to surface deep and wide disenchantment with Ayub himself. Despite his astounding contribution to Pakistan's economic development, most people seemed to have agreed that the time was ripe for him to step down. As a result, an apparently baffled Ayub, announced his "final and irrevocable" decision on February 21, 1969, not to seek reelection for the presidency of Pakistan.[24]

VI. THE FALL OF AYUB KHAN

Mujib's unconditional release from prison was also demanded by the Democratic Action Committee (DAC) comprised of the Awami League (Mujib), the Awami League (Nasrullah), the National Awami Party (Requisition), Jamiatul Ulama-e-Islam, the National Democratic Front, the Council Muslim League, and the Jamaat-e-Islami. The DAC demanded replacement of Ayub's basic democracy[25] by direct election on the basis of a universal adult franchise, immediate withdrawal of the emergency rule, and release of all political leaders, including Mujib and Bhutto (Rizvi 1974, 199–203).

Following his irrevocable decision not to seek reelection on February 21, 1969—a year before expiry of his term, Ayub called an all-party round table conference (RTC) on March 10–15, 1969, to consider the demands of the opposition parties. But the DAC insisted that Mujib, who was in jail at the time in connection with the Agartala Conspiracy Case, must join the RTC in order to make the conference meaningful. Initially, Ayub wanted Mujib to join the RTC on bail or parole, but Mujib refused to do so, leaving Ayub with no choice but to release Mujib from prison unconditionally. Immediately after his release, on February 23, 1969, at a massive rally at the Paltan Maidan in Dhaka, the student community of East Pakistan conferred the epithet of Bangabandhu (friend of Bengal) on him, catapulting Mujib as a predominant national leader of Pakistan.

Eventually, a free and triumphant Mujib joined the RTC in Lahore to demand that the Pakistan government accept his 6-point formula as well as the 11-point program of the student community of East Pakistan. He demanded immediate elections on the basis of universal adult franchise and formation of federation of Pakistan with guarantee of full regional autonomy to all provinces in accordance

with his six-point formula. Mujib also made it clear that his six-point demand must be met, otherwise Pakistan's disintegration would be unstoppable.

Mujib asserted, "I will not go back on my word to the people. These [six points] are the people's demands. We have waited for 20 years. We want justice now."[26]At some point, Mujib and Ayub exchanged "acrimonious remarks," when the latter steadfastly maintained that the acceptance of the six-point would be tantamount to dividing Pakistan into several states (Mahmood 1972, 308–309). Most West Pakistani leaders also refused to accept the six-point—they were more interested in the demands for a parliamentary system and direct elections for national and provincial assemblies. Since neither Ayub nor West Pakistani leaders could accept Mujib's demand, the RTC ended up in a failure.[27]

Within two weeks of the RTC, Ayub's iron rule, which was marveled as "textbook classic by economists and statesmen alike" (Dobell 1969, 297) crumbled under the sheer forces of the mass uprising, and he left the country's political scene for good by transferring power to General Aga Mohammad Yahya Khan (1917–80), chief of Pakistan's armed forces. Apparently, at the height of the unrest, Yahya conspired with army generals, some members of Ayub's cabinet, top bureaucracy, and PPP chief Bhutto, to bring down the Ayub regime (Kapur 1991, 82–84). It was rumored that , while terminating the Agartala Conspiracy Case and releasing Mujib unconditionally, Ayub also entertained idea of introducing a parliamentary system in the country and naming Mujib as the country's prime minister, but Yahya persuaded him no to do so arguing that it would be difficult for the army to take orders from someone who never showed affection for the armed forces and who had been accused of anti-state activities.[28]

On March 20, 1969, Ayub asked Yahya to enforce full martial law in Pakistan, and five days later, on March 25th, he handed over power to the armed forces to "fulfill their constitutional responsibilities."[29] While announcing his resignation in a special radio broadcast, Ayub castigated Mujib's six-point for proposing that "the country be divided into two parts, the center be made weak and helpless organ, the defense forces be paralyzed completely and West Pakistan's political position be ended. I cannot preside over the destruction of my country" (Dawn, March 26, 1969). Immediately after Ayub's resignation, Yahya abrogated the constitution and dissolved national and provincial assemblies, but refrained from banning political parties.[30]

Arguably, much of the modernization, urbanization, and industrialization of

East Pakistan, which paved the way for an urban uprising against the Ayub regime took place under his own watch. East Pakistan, essentially a rural-agrarian economy, had only a few cotton and sugar mills, and not a single jute mill, at the time of the partition of British India. Ayub increased public sector development outlays to East Pakistan from 38 percent in 1960–61 to 54 percent in 1967–68, and share of governmental loans and credits to East Pakistan from 47 percent to 67 percent during the same period (PPC 1968).

That before Ayub's takeover of presidency, the power of Pakistan was essentially concentrated in the hands of West Pakistanis and they hardly cared about the development of East Pakistan can hardly be questioned. "The inequality of treatment of the two regions, at least until 1958, was an accepted fact" (Jaffrelot 2004, 48). But by 1967, there were 65 jute mills, several paper mills, fertilizer and chemical plants, and other large industrial enterprises in East Pakistan—almost all of such industrialization took place during the Ayub regime (Dowlah 2009, 65–68). At the same time, in April 1968, 66 percent of all industrial assets, 79 percent of all insurance funds, and 80 percent of all bank assets were owned by only 15 families, and the top 5 percent of households in Pakistan received 20 percent of total personal income (Maniruzzaman 1971, 229).

Despite mounting evidence of income inequality, Western scholars and leaders marveled the progress that took place in Pakistan during Ayub's decade-long rule. Huntington (1968, 250), for example, remarked that Ayub was more than "any other political leader in a modernizing country after World War II" who came close to filling the role of "a Solon or Lycurgus, or 'Great Legislator' on the Platonic or Rousseauian model." The US president Lyndon Johnson, French president de Gaulle, and World Bank president Robert McNamara—all went to great lengths to congratulate Ayub for achieving great success in economic development and maintaining political stability during his ten-year rule (Dobell 1969).

Ayub's period has widely been dubbed as the best decade of industrialization and urbanization of Pakistan. Along with the processes of industrialization and urbanization, came remarkable improvements in transport and communications, education, and healthcare. New cadres of doctors, lawyers, teachers, and other professional groups emerged as the number of students in colleges and universities increased manifold. As a result, arose a new industrial working class, a new class of vernacular elites, and a brand new middle class, who along with a huge reserve force of students, found an outlet for their rising hopes and

aspirations in Mujib and his six-point formula, which underpinned universal adult franchise and the right of self-determination for the people of East Pakistan.[31]

VII. THE AWAMI LEAGUE'S ELECTION VICTORY

In his first address to the nation on March 26, 1969, General Yahya committed himself to creating conditions for restoring a constitutional government and transferring power to people's representatives elected freely on the basis of universal adult franchise. His martial law also symbolized a qualitative shift from his predecessor Ayub Khan. While Ayub's martial law resulted in expulsion of thousands of political leaders and government officials from public offices under so-called EBDO—the Elective Bodies (Disqualification) Order, and the PODO—the Public Offices (Disqualification) Order, which unleashed prosecution of political leaders and government officials for alleged misconduct and corruption,[32] Yahya opened the door for negotiations with political leaders of both wings of Pakistan to make a transition to democracy as soon as possible.

Six months later, on November 28, 1969, Yahya made two far-reaching decisions, which literally transformed Pakistan's political landscape forever. He dissolved the so-called One Unit called West Pakistan, which was established in 1955 by merging all four provinces of the western part of the country into one political entity. Yahya restored the old four provinces of West Pakistan—Punjab, Baluchistan, Sindh, and the NWFP. Then he adopted the principle of universal adult franchise—one-man-one vote principle for the upcoming general election of Pakistan. By repudiating two of the central pillars of Ayub's decade-long iron rule over Pakistan—concentration of state power around two provinces and political representation organized under a pseudo democracy called basic democracy—Yahya succeeded in easing his rapport with major political parties of the country. Yahya, however, kept the power in the hands of the top brass of military—General Abdul Hamid Khan, Air Marshall Nur Khan, Vice-Admiral S. M. Ahsan, and General Peerjada.

On January 1, 1970, the military junta withdrew the ban on political activities. Two months later, in March, Yahya announced the so-called Legal Framework Order (LFO) outlining the principles for the election of a new National Assembly of Pakistan. The LFO allocated parliamentary seats on the basis of the 1961 census. Thus, of the 300-member National Assembly, 162 were allocated to East Pakistan, 82 to Punjab, 27 to Sind, 4 to Baluchistan, 18 to the North-

West Frontier Province, and 7 to the centrally administered tribal areas of West Pakistan. In addition, the LFO reserved 13 seats for women—7 for East Pakistan, 3 for Punjab, and 1 each for other provinces and tribal areas.

Similarly, provincial assembly seats for four provinces were allocated on the basis of the same census—310 seats earmarked for East Pakistan, 186 for Punjab, 62 for Sind, 42 for the North-West Frontier Province, and 21 for Baluchistan. Since the parliamentary seats were distributed in keeping with the population counts, and since the election was based on universal adult franchise, the majority of the parliamentary seats went to East Pakistan potentially shifting the balance of power in favor of densely populated East Pakistan. Still, Yahya went ahead with the allocation of majority seats to East Pakistan despite many of his top generals strongly opposed to yielding so much representation to the East Pakistan (Ziring 1974, 327).

Yahya's LFO stipulated five major principles for the new constitution: (a) it must ensure the independence, territorial integrity, and national solidarity of Pakistan; (b) it must reflect the "teachings of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and Sunnah," and designate the country as an Islamic Republic; (c) it must provide for democracy—free and periodic elections on the basis of a universal adult franchise, with a guarantee of fundamental human rights; (d) it must grant maximum autonomy to provinces, while the center retained adequate powers—administrative, legislative, and financial—to manage its internal affairs and carry out external responsibilities necessary for preserving the independence and territorial integrity of Pakistan; and finally (e) it must contain statutory provisions for removing social, economic, and political disparities among the various provinces of Pakistan.

The LFO also required that (a) the National Assembly must frame a new constitution within 120 days, failure of which would lead to the dissolution of the assembly and the holding of fresh elections for a new legislative body; (b) the new constitution must receive presidential authentication; and (c) the president had the prerogative to decide any questions on the interpretation of the LFO without recourse to courts (Singh et al. 1999, 49–65).

The Position of Mujib

To Mujib, the declaration of general elections as well as the LFO came as a great opportunity to kill two birds with one stone—now he could come to power through constitutional means and at the same time achieve full autonomy for East Pakistan for which he and his party had long been fighting. A general election on the basis of the universal adult franchise, as well as the allocation of 169 seats to East Pakistan, out of 313-member Pakistan National Assembly, already shifted pendulum of political power in favor of East Pakistan. He could presumably form a central government without winning a single seat in any other provinces of Pakistan. No other political party could do so.

Counting on his immense support in East Pakistan, Mujib thus dedicated himself single-mindedly to winning the general election. In his electioneering, he championed the six-point as the Magna Carta for the Bangalees and assured the people that their rights of self-determination could be established through electoral and constitutional processes without resorting to armed struggle as professed by some left-leaning politicians (Jahan 1987, 30–35). Mujib was confident that his party could win up to 80 percent of the votes in East Pakistan in the upcoming general election (Khan 1999, 316–317).

In its election manifesto, the Awami League promised "a living democracy" in which "people shall live in freedom and with dignity," and pledged, "no law repugnant to the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the Holy Quran and Sunnah shall be enacted or enforced in Pakistan." The manifesto also pledged fundamental rights and freedom of all citizens, independence of the judiciary from the executive branch, and envisaged full autonomy to all provinces of Pakistan "on the basis of the Six-Point formula" and "just representation of persons from all parts of Pakistan" in all branches of the federal government on the basis of population.

The manifesto, however, called for two separate currencies for Pakistan, which would be mutually or freely convertible in all provinces, and demanded establishment of regional reserve banks that would "prevent the transfer of resources and flight of capital from one region to another." The manifesto also pledged promoting "substantial resource transfers" from more developed areas of the country to less developed areas, and called for priority nationalization of banking, insurance, heavy industries, foreign trade, and the jute trade. Finally, it called for separate militia or paramilitary force "in order to contribute effectively towards national security" (Singh *et al.* 1999, 67–82). While launching his

election campaign at a rally in Dhaka on June 7, 1970, Mujib lashed out at those who raised the "cries of Islam in danger" asserting that "The Six Points will be realized and Pakistan shall also stay" (Dawn, June 8, 1970).

The Position of Bhutto

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, chief of the PPP—the most powerful political party in West Pakistan—enjoyed staunch military support as the top generals hailed from his home base—the province of Sindh. Both the LFO and the dissolution of the One Unit came as good news for him. He apparently calculated that his party would be able to capture majority seats in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh, and thus would be able to form the central government of Pakistan as East Pakistani parliamentary seats would be split between three parties—the Awami League of Mujib, the Bhashani-led NAP, and the fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami (Ziring 1974, 327).

The PPP's election manifesto and campaigns revolved around four slogans: Islam is our faith; democracy is our policy; socialism is our economy; and all power to the people (Rizvi 1974, 227). Apparently, representing an amalgam of political forces, Bhutto kept his campaign platform relatively vague and appealed to different groups in different languages, and most importantly, he refrained himself from publicly rejecting the Six points anticipating that this would keep the door open for post-election negotiations with Mujib and the Awami League (Jahan 1994, 35–36).

Yahya Khan and his military junta apparently calculated the outcome of the elections in the same way as did Bhutto. They also assumed that in West Pakistan Bhutto's PPP would carry provinces of Sind and the Punjab, while making significant inroads in the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. They also expected that in East Pakistan no single party would be the clear winner, and therefore, Bhutto's PPP would be able to form the central government in Pakistan. Obviously, the military junta preferred Bhutto over Mujib, and envisioned that in worst case scenario if the Awami League won a simple majority and came to form a coalition government with the support of some smaller West Pakistani political parties, it would be forced to water down its Six points, and thus might not pose a great threat to the military.

Devastating Cyclone in East Pakistan

All such calculations of contending parties as well as the military junta, however, changed drastically by the devastating cyclone and tidal wave which hit coastal areas of East Pakistan on November 12, 1970. The cyclone swept through the 5 southern coastal districts of East Pakistan at 120 miles wind per hour raising a tidal wave more than 30 feet high and affecting about 5 million people over an area of about 5,000 square miles. Incidentally, on the day of the cyclone, Yahya was returning from an official visit to China. He had a brief stopover in Dhaka to order his administration to take necessary measures to help flood and cyclone victims, but left Dhaka immediately afterward. The people of East Pakistan viewed Yahya's quick departure from Dhaka, in the midst of the country's worst flood and cyclone, as a sign of inexcusable negligence to their wellbeing. Many of the country's politicians were also disgusted by similar lack of sympathy from West Pakistani political leaders.

Pointing to such a scale of indifference and abandonment, one of the prominent leaders of East Pakistan, Moulana Bhashani, openly declared that it was painful for him to even consider himself as a Pakistani citizen. Eventually, he and his party decided to boycott the general election in order to take care of the cyclone victims. Mujib, on the other hand, went to the extent of accusing the Pakistani government of criminal negligence, but continued his campaign for the general election. The cyclone indeed presented Mujib with an enormous opportunity to galvanize support for his party as the West Pakistani rulers once again demonstrated their utter disregard to the interests of East Pakistani people. Although in the aftermath of the cyclone it was very clear the Awami League would win a landslide in East Pakistan, Yahya still remained committed to serve as a neutral referee to make a transition to a constitutional government. Apparently, Mujib had several secret meetings with Yahya in Dhaka between late November and early December, 1970, when he privately assured Yahya that his six-point would be watered down after the election (Chowdhury 1974, 85–101).

The Election Results

The elections for the central and provincial assemblies (parliaments) were held on December 7 and 17, 1970, respectively, with the exception of 9 central and 21 provincial seats, which were affected by the devastating tidal wave and cyclone in East Pakistan. Elections of these seats were completed by January 17, 1971. The outcome of the election came as a great surprise to many observers as belying most predictions Pakistan ended up with two provincial majorities. The Awami League won overwhelming majority in the 300-member central parliament (the National Assembly of Pakistan), with all its seats in East Pakistan. On the other hand, Bhutto's PPP won majority seats in West Pakistan, but none in East Pakistan (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Results of the General Elections of Pakistan, 1970–71

	General Assembly						
	Allocation of Seats						
	General	*Women*	*Total*	*Seats won by the AL*	*Percentage of Votes Won by the AL (all Pakistan)*	*Seats Won by the PPP*	*Percentage of Votes Won by the PPP (all Pakistan)*
East Pakistan	162	7	169	167*	38.3% of votes cast	—	—
West Pakistan	138	6	144	—	—	88**	19.5%
The Punjab	82	3	85			64	
Sind	27	1	28			18	
Baluchistan	4	1	5			—	
The North-West Frontier Province	18	1	19			1	
Centrally Administered Tribal Areas	7	1	8			—	
Provincial Assemblies							
East Pakistan	300	10	310	288§			
West Pakistan	300	11	311	—		148§	
Punjab	180	6				113	
Sind	60	2				32	
Baluchistan	20	1				—	
North-West Frontier Province	40	2				3	
Centrally Administered Tribal Areas	—	—				—	

Notes: *Including 7 women seats. ** Including 5 women seats. § Women seats not included.
Source: Author's compilation from Singh et al. (1999, I: 56–57, 130).

Out of the 162 seats in East Pakistan, Mujib's Awami League won all but 2. One of these seats went to a former chief minister of East Pakistan Nurul Amin, who belonged to the Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP), and the other went to a tribal leader of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Manobendra Narayan Larma. In West Pakistan, Bhutto's PPP won 83 of 138 seats—the party however captured majority seats in 2 powerful provinces—in Punjab (64 out of 85) and in Sind (18 out of 28).

In provincial assemblies, the Awami League won 288 seats out of 300 seats in East Pakistan, while the PPP won 148 of the 300 seats in West Pakistan, mainly

in the Punjab and Sind provinces. In the National Assembly elections, the Awami League captured 38.3 percent of votes cast, while the PPP won 19.5 percent. In East Pakistan, in the elections of both the National Assembly and the Provincial Assembly, the Awami League received over 80 percent of the votes cast. Mujib's overwhelming victory in the election was also facilitated by the boycotting of the election by Bhashani NAP.[33] The election almost completely routed out all religion-based political parties of Pakistan.

Tragically, instead of resolving the political crisis of Pakistan, the outcome of the 1970 general elections plunged the nation into one of its most far-reaching constitutional crises. Both leaders, Mujib and Bhutto, wanted to be the next prime minister of the country. While Mujib based his claim on the fact that he had won majority seats in the Pakistan National Assembly, Bhutto capitalized on his largest majority in West Pakistan and the second largest majority nation-wide. Mujib took his victory as a mandate for his Six-Points and called for a loose federation of the two parts of Pakistan, in which a central authority would be responsible for foreign affairs, currency, and defense only, and the provinces would enjoy widest possible autonomy. Bhutto, on the other hand, viewed the election outcome as a manifestation of provincialism: Majority seats in one province could not be considered majority seats for the whole country (Mahmood 1972, 319). This fateful controversy effectively put the nation on a course of eventual disintegration.

NOTES

1. The Sepoy Mutiny (1857–58) was the first formidable challenge that the British rulers confronted since the taking over of India in 1757. The mutiny manifested growing Hindu nationalism and angers of displaced Muslim rulers against consolidation of British rule in India. This was a time when "deposed princes, disgruntled aristocrats, and impoverished peasants all longed with nostalgia for the glorious golden past" (Wolpert 1982, 78–79), and they waged war against British rule. The mutiny was however crushed immediately.

2. Some prominent Muslim leaders, such as Moulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), a close confidant of M. K. Gandhi, however, did not embrace the "Two-Nations Theory," who described it as "one of the greatest frauds on the people to suggest that religious affinity can unite areas which are geographically, economically, linguistically and culturally different." Another prominent Muslim leader, Allah Baksh, then prime minister of the Muslim majority state of Sind, also opposed the demand for a separate Muslim land (Panday 1969, 154).

3. Some observers, however, maintain that the framers of the Lahore Resolution might have taken a clue from the American Declaration of Independence in which American colonies were described as "Free and Independent States" (Tinker 1990, 200). As noted below, this question, whether the Lahore Resolution called for several "independent states" or "Independent States" for the Indian Muslims haunted Pakistan up until its eventual dismemberment in 1971. See Jalal (1985) for more details.

4. It is notable that poet Rabindranath Tagore wrote his famous song, "Amar Sonar Bangla Ami Tomay Bhalovashi" (My Golden Bengal, I Love You), which Bangladesh later adopted as its national anthem, in order to rekindle emotional sentiments in opposition to the division of Bengal in 1905.

5. East Pakistan was known as East Bengal until 1956, when the first constitution of Pakistan renamed it as East Pakistan.

6. Gordon (1994, 279–321), indeed, makes a prophetic remark in this context by pointing out that at the time of the partition of British India, the Muslims of Bengal "chose to vote for Pakistan and a smaller national unit than united India." Similarly, in 1971, they fought for a "still smaller unit over which neither Hindus nor Urdu-Muslims would have control."

7. Official figures indicate that Pakistan had a total population of 75.6 million in 1951—of which 41.9 million (55.4%) lived in East Pakistan, and the remaining 33.7 million (44.5%) lived in West Pakistan.

8. The Pakistan Constituent Assembly adopted both Urdu and Bengali as official languages of Pakistan on May 8, 1954. Then, the first constitution of Pakistan in 1956 incorporated both as official languages of Pakistan.

9. Originally Pakistan's capital was built in Karachi at a cost of Rs. 200 million, then in the mid-1960s, a new capital was built in Islamabad (Rawalpindi) at a cost of another Rs. 200 million and the former capital was given to the province of West Pakistan (now Sind) at no cost (Faaland and Parkinson 1976, 6).

10. Even the largest jute-processing factory in the world at Narayanganj, an industrial suburb of Dhaka, was owned by the Adamjee family from West Pakistan (Heitzman and Worden 1989).

11. See Tables 4.7, 4.8, and 4.10 in Muhith (1992, 109–113), which provide details on annual interwing trade, exports, and imports of Pakistan during the period of 1947–69.

12. At the time of Indian partition, out of the 133 Muslim officers in the Indian Civil Service (ICS)/Indian Police Service (IPS), only one was from East Bengal. In 1948, out of 18 CSP officers in Pakistan, only 2 were from East Pakistan. By 1958, however, the number from East Pakistan had increased to 62, with a total of 216 in Pakistan. East Pakistan's representation in the CSP increased mainly because of the quota system, introduced in the early days of Pakistan, under which 20 percent were selected on the basis of merit and the rest were divided equally between East and West Pakistan. See Dowlah (2009, 47–48) for more details.

13. For more details on administrative and military representation of East Pakistanis, see Dowlah (2009,

45–49), Jahan (1994, 23–26), Callard (1957), and Goodnow (1964).

14. Mujib's student life at Dhaka University, however, came to an abrupt end in 1949 when the university expelled him for subversive political activities. His expulsion order was rescinded posthumously by the university in the early 2000s.

15. Mujib, however, was not among the demonstrators on February 21, 1952, when Pakistani authorities opened fire on the demonstrators. By then he was already in prison for opposing Jinnah's scheme to establish Urdu as the lingua franca of Pakistan.

16. The accusation of breakdown in law and order was prompted by industrial unrests at Karnaphuli Paper Mills in Chittagong and the Adamjee Jute Mills near Dhaka, which resulted in dozens of deaths. Apparently, the Haq government refused to take action against agitating workers at the industrial centers as they were supporters of the Awami League, a component of the United Front alliance. For more details, see Sen (1986, 130–131), Wright (1988, 78), and Mahmood (1972, 65).

17. New York Times reporter, John P. Callahan, had an interview with Fazlul Haq in Karachi on May 22, 1954, but his report was based on his own impression of what Haq meant, not on what Haq said. The repercussion of the comment, however, was "felt from Pakistan to the United States," and in Pakistan it was received as "horrendous," "irresponsible," and "treasonous" (Ziring 1998, 158–159). Following dismissal of the United Front government on May 29, 1954, Pakistani authorities invited Haq to become the home minister of the central government in order to silence him from engaging in further demands for an independent nation of East Bengal (Chatterjee 2010, 23).

18. For full description of the six-point, see http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Six-point_Programme.

19. Mahmood (1972, 293–295) claims that Indian radio regularly publicized "Mujib's activities and his Six Points," in order to incite "the people of East Pakistan to join the secessionists." Moreover, India, "a country which was the greatest enemy of Pakistan and had not yet reconciled itself with the existence of Pakistan," published several books depicting plans for "independent Bengal," and Indian embassies "all over the world" rendered valuable services in "propagating Six Points as the genuine demand of East Pakistanis."

20. For an exploration of the possible authors of the six-point see Dowlah (2009, 57–61). Also see Ahmed (1979, 25–26, 79–86), Muhith (1992, 137), Chowdhury (1974, 134), Singh *et al.* (1999, 23–33), and Jahan (1994, 170).

21. The Ayub regime claimed that the meeting, held on July 12, 1967, in Agartala, organized by P. N. Ojha, an Indian diplomat stationed in Dhaka, was attended by several Indian military officials including Colonel Misra and Major Menon. For more details, see Ahmed (1979, 92–93) and Muhith (1992, 150–153).

22. Gauhar (1985, 116) maintains that Pakistani investigation into the conspiracy case did not reveal "any direct link between Sheikh Mujib and other conspirators," still Yahya persuaded Ayub to include Mujib's name in the case.

23. For more details, see Maniruzzaman (1988, 66), Rizvi (1974, 208), chapters 6 and 7 of Ahmed (1979), and Banglapedia: http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Agartala_Conspiracy_Case.

24. Ayub's reputation was also tarnished as two of his sons were accused of amassing huge wealth during his regime. One of them—Gohar Ayub, managing director of Gandhara Industries Limited—not only emerged as one of the so-called 22 richest families of Pakistan, but also fueled widespread speculation that Ayub was preparing him for succession (Rizvi 1974, 193).

25. The Basic Democracies was a brainchild of Ayub Khan for an indirect elective system, which was enshrined in the 1962 constitution of Pakistan. The system had five tiers of indirectly elected and nominated institutions, of which the lowest and the most basic unit was union councils, composed of an approximate population of 10,000. Each union council comprised ten directly elected members and five appointed members, called Basic Democrats. The next tiers were subdistrict, districts, divisional, and provincial councils. Under the 1962 constitution, the Basic Democrats formed an electoral college to elect the president, the National Assembly, and the provincial assemblies.

26. The Times (London), March 12, 1969. Cited in Rizvi (1974, 207).

27. Some opposition leaders, including Moulana Bhashani of East Pakistan and Bhutto of West Pakistan, boycotted the conference. Bhashani stood for "mass upheaval" for realizing universal adult franchise, full autonomy of East Pakistan and the annulment of the one-unit scheme in West Pakistan (Rizvi 1974, 201). Bhutto, on the other hand, knew that Ayub's days were numbered and refused to "compromise with a sinking man" (Chowdhury 1974, 36).

28. Moudud Ahmed (1979, 143–145), who accompanied Mujib at the conference, claims that during the RTC, Yahya and Mujib had secret negotiations when Yahya offered Mujib to be prime minister of a government headed by Ayub Khan as president. Mujib, however, claimed that Ayub himself offered him the prime ministership of Pakistan, but he refused to accept it, maintaining that he wanted to be elected, not appointed (Khan 2002, 867).

29. Ahmed (1979, 150–152; 173–175) claims that, during the RTC meeting on March 13, 1969, Ayub invited Mujib to a secret dinner in Rawalpindi, when he expressed his concerns whether Pakistan would remain one country with the incorporation of the six-point, and asked Mujib to submit a plan within the constitutional framework of Pakistan. Apparently Mujib made such a plan available to Ayub within a week. Ayub decided to hand over power to the armed forces on March 25, just a few days after the plan was presented to him.

30. Ayub Khan's abdication (Gauhar, 1985), however, prompted some speculations in concerned circles. Cloughley (2016), for example, maintains that Ayub handed over the presidency in all but name to Yahya Khan in January 1968—more than one year before his actual resignation—and he resigned "due to poor health exacerbated by social and political difficulties that he was unable to understand or solve." What actually happened was that in January 1968, Ayub was stricken by heart attack followed by relapse when the presidential house was cordoned off and Yahya Khan terminated all contacts with "dying President and his political and civilian associates." With Ayub's recovery in two weeks, Yahya and military officers, however, returned to barracks (Gauhar 1985, 115). Ayub, however, never recovered to his old stature as military generals came to play dominant roles, political agitation soared, and Pakistan's relationship with the United States deteriorated.

31. For more details on such transformation, see Ziring (1971), Rizvi (1974), Maniruzzaman (1988, 12–14), Jahan (1994, 38–50), Khan (1996, 57–59), and Dowlah (2009, 65–68).

32. Ayub made these laws retroactively effective from the day of Pakistan's independence—August 14, 1947. As a result, thousands of politicians—members of provincial and national assemblies as well as political party activists—were expelled from public offices. Among the EDBOed were two prominent East Pakistani politicians—H. S. Suhrawardy and Ataur Rahman Khan. For more details, see Rizvi (1974, 110–112).

33. For detailed results of the election, see Singh et al. (1999, 56–57).

Chapter 2

The Failure of Tripartite Negotiation and the Military Crackdown

I. INTRODUCTION

Instead of facilitating a transition to a constitutional government and democratic rule, the outcome of the 1970 general elections plunged Pakistan into a profound constitutional crisis. Neither of the country's top two elected leaders, Mujib and Bhutto, would concede—both claimed legitimate right to be the next prime minister of the country. Mujib contented that he won majority of seats of the Pakistan National Assembly, Bhutto argued that while Mujib won the largest majority in East Pakistan, he won the largest majority in West Pakistan—if winning of majority of seats in one wing of the country is considered a majority for the whole country, then Pakistan had two majority parties. While Mujib emphasized that his party's victory in the general election gave him a mandate to form a central government on the basis of the Six-Points, Bhutto viewed the six-point as a sure recipe for the disintegration of Pakistan itself. Yahya Khan, who had just completed "a significant and successful first step toward the restoration of democratic, representative, civilian government in a country which has experienced authoritarian government for so long" (Baxter 1971, 217), was thus caught in the middle.

This chapter explains the events and developments that unfolded following the general election of 1970 (section 2), the intricacies of the tripartite negotiation in the crucial days of March 1971 (section 3), the military crackdown in Dhaka by Pakistani military on the night of March 25–26, 1971 (section 4), and the anatomy of the failure of tripartite negotiation (section 4).

II. MASHROOMING CLOUDS

Initially, all three key players of Pakistani politics—Mujib, Bhutto, and Yahya—showed a conciliatory attitude to begin the process of framing a new constitution of Pakistan as per the mandate of the general election. The Legal Framework Order (LFO), which underpinned the elections, stipulated that a new constitution must be produced within 120 days of the election ensuring five constitutional principles as elaborated in last chapter. Complications, however, began to surface as Mujib declared his six-point as nonnegotiable immediately after his election victory.

On January 3, 1971, while administering the oath of office to the newly elected members of national and provincial assemblies (MNAs and MPAs) of his party at the Suhrawardy Uddayan, Mujib ruled out any possibility of compromise on the basic principles embodied in the six-point formula. He declared that his election victory was a referendum on his six-point and any interference with the verdict of the people would result in a bloody movement that would spin out of control (Blood 2002, 136).

Surprised by the hardened position of Mujib, Yahya rushed to Dhaka on January 12 to discuss evolving political situation. There have been conflicting reports on the deliberations that ensued. According one account given by a Bangladeshi national who accompanied Yahya as his political adviser, Mujib was blunt in his talks with Yahya, and made it clear that as the leader of the majority party he himself had the right to frame the constitution of Pakistan, while Yahya's only responsibility was to call the National Assembly session without any delay. As a result, a frustrated Yahya returned to Rawalpindi with bitter feelings for Mujib, although he described his discussions with Mujib as useful to the press (Chowdhury 1974, 147–152).

Another account provided by a US diplomat stationed in Dhaka at that time, who asserts that there was "nothing on the record to indicate that Yahya left Dhaka on January 14th in a state of despair." He argues that Yahya departed rather with a feeling that the transfer of power had been concluded, that the conditions laid down in the LFO had been effectively met, and before his departure from Dhaka, Yahya even referred to Mujib as the future prime minister of Pakistan (Dunbar 1972, 449). East Pakistan's governor Admiral Ahsan, who accompanied Yahya in some of these meetings, also maintained that Mujib showed "every indication of desiring to work for the continued integrity of Pakistan and had demonstrated an awareness of the importance of achieving

the broadest possible consensus on the constitution" (Blood 2002, 138).

On January 17, 1971, Yahya along with his top military advisers, Generals Hamid Khan and M. Peerzada, met with Bhutto at latter's family home in Larkana. There are conflicting accounts of the deliberations of the meeting as well. Some accounts suggest that the meeting was organized by top Pakistani generals in order to hatch a "sinister alliance" with Bhutto to convince Yahya not to summon the National Assembly session until Mujib agreed to amend his six-point. These accounts also suggest that Bhutto and military generals even asked Yahya in the meeting to destroy Mujib through military action if necessary (Khan 1983; Mahmood, 1984). Dunbar (1972), however, maintains that in the meeting Yahya outlined three options for the Awami League: go it alone, cooperate with the PPP, or cooperate with the smaller parties of West Pakistan. He also persuaded Bhutto to meet with Mujib in Dhaka in order to work out a compromise formula.

Accordingly, Bhutto and Mujib had three days of talks in Dhaka on January 27–29, 1971. At the conclusion of the meetings, Bhutto indicated that he had no problem in accepting points one and six of the six-point formula—with the provisions for federal and parliamentary structure of the government, universal adult franchise, supremacy of the legislative branch, and the provincial government's authority to maintain paramilitary forces—but he had problems with the other points, especially those that called for relinquishing of federal control over foreign trade and aid, creation of separate currencies, and separate control of foreign exchange and government revenues among provinces. Here again there had been some conflicting accounts. One account suggests that the meetings between the leaders went well as Mujib treated Bhutto cordially, wined and dined him, and even took him on a boat ride (Syed 1992, 99). Another account suggests that Bhutto "came away from Dhaka talks believing that Mujib disliked him … (and) sensed little interest on Mujib's part in cooperation with him or his party" (Blood 2002, 142–143).

Upon his return to Karachi, Bhutto apparently had several meetings with Yahya when he insisted that his party would not join the National Assembly to rubberstamp the constitution prepared by the Awami League. He, however, still kept the door open for a possible compromise with Mujib, and advised Yahya to call the National Assembly session in late March so that he could have time to "complete consultations within his own party, … prepare public opinion for a compromise with the Awami League" (Syed 1992, 100). At the same time, Mujib kept on demanding an immediate session of the National Assembly and

warned Yahya of dire consequences for delaying the session.

Caught in between, on February 13, Yahya called for the National Assembly session to begin on March 3, 1971. The Awami League welcomed the announcement, even in preparation for the upcoming parliamentary session elected Mujib as the leader and Syed Nazrul Islam as the deputy leader of its parliamentary party. The party also elected Yusuf Ali as the party whip and Mansur Ali as the leader of the provincial legislative assembly. Khandker Mushtaque was expected to be the speaker of the National Assembly (*Pakistan Observer*, February 17, 1971).

Bhutto, on the other hand, furiously rejected Yahya's decision to call the National Assembly session on March 3, and on February 15, announced his decision to boycott the session as his party would not "endorse the constitution already prepared by a party." He also warned that he could not put his parliamentarians in a position of "double hostage," as his party would be deemed as anti-Indian and anti-six-point at the same time. On February 17, Bhutto raised his rhetoric further by describing the National Assembly in Dhaka as a "slaughter house" and warned West Pakistani parliamentarians to go to Dhaka at their own risk. On February 18, Bhutto declared that Pakistan had three power constituencies—the Awami League, the PPP, and the military—and that it was up to Mujib to go it alone or accommodate the interests of other constituencies (*Dawn* February 16–19, 1971).

On February 19, in his meeting with Yahya, Bhutto claimed that he represented half of Pakistan, just as Mujib did, and that no constitution of Pakistan could be framed ignoring the half that he represented. The Awami League refuted Bhutto's claim by pointing out that Bhutto's party won majority of seats only in two provinces—in Sindh and Punjab, not in entire West Pakistan. On February 28, at a public rally in Lahore, Bhutto threatened to launch a civil disobedience movement throughout West Pakistan had Yahya not postponed the National Assembly session scheduled for March 3 or lifted the 120-day deadline on framing the constitution. He also asserted that he would oppose any move that would put Pakistan under Mujib's leadership or bring the *Bangalee*s to the center of power. Coincidentally, a day before, on February 27, Mujib declared that if the provinces in West Pakistan "did not want a constitution on the basis of Six-Point, they could have a constitution of their own and go their separate way" (Syed 1992, 103).

Confronting such mounting pressures and heightened rhetoric from both sides, a baffled Yahya made a fateful decision on March 1 to postpone the National

Assembly session indefinitely. By doing so at the insistence of Bhutto, Blood (2002, 163) notes, "Yahya had cast his fateful die and had crossed his Rubicon. Unlike Julius Caesar, however, he was not to go on to greater power and glory, but to stumble down a path leading to frustration, bloody civil war and complete defeat and humiliation." Mujib's response to Yahya's decision was swift and decisive.

The next day, Mujib launched a civil disobedience movement, which literally wiped out any semblance of central government's authority in the whole province of East Pakistan. The entire governmental administration, the judiciary, the press, all political parties and the masses—all rallied spontaneously in support of Mujib's call. Even Moulana Bhashani, who consistently opposed the six-point, began to interpret the Awami League's electoral victory as unambiguous mandate for the independence of East Pakistan.

Agitated student community, already the vanguard of the country's struggle for self-determination, responded even more fiercely. On March 2, a leader of the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU), A. S. M. Abdur Rab, hoisted the first flag of independent Bangladesh. Then, on March 3, Shajahan Siraj, a leader of the Central Students Action Committee (CSAC), read out the "Program of Independence" at a grand rally at the Paltan Maidan.[1] In the same meeting, the CSAC also adopted "Amar Sonar Bangla"—a song composed by Nobel Laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore—as the national anthem of Bangladesh.[2]

With East Pakistan on the verge of secession, on March 6, Yahya rescheduled the National Assembly session for March 25 and decided to come to Dhaka in mid-March to work out a compromise between Mujib and Bhutto. On March 7, however, Mujib delivered his historic speech at the Suhrawardy Uddayan—perhaps the best of his tumultuous political life—calling for a total noncooperation with Pakistan government. He called upon the *Bangalee*s (the people of East Pakistan) to denounce any Pakistani authority until the country's political power was transferred to the Awami League and ordered the state-run radio and television stations not to broadcast any anti-*Bangalee* news. Addressing a mammoth meeting, Mujib declared in thunderous voice, *Ebaraer Sangram Mukhtir Sangram, Ebarer Sangram Shwdhinatar Sangram* (this time it is the struggle for emancipation, this time it is the struggle for independence). He also gave a four-point ultimatum to President Yahya: (a) lift the martial law immediately; (b) take the soldiers back to barracks; (c) investigate the mass killings in Bangladesh; and (d) transfer power to the Awami League

immediately.

Responding to Mujib's call for civil disobedience and reflecting rousing sentiment of the *Bangalee*s, the Dhaka Center of the Radio Pakistan was immediately renamed Dhaka Betar Kendra when it began using the name of the country as *Bangla Desh*, instead of East Pakistan. An overwhelming majority of print journalists also sided with the *Bangla Desh* cause. Numerous cultural personalities and groups spontaneously entertained demonstrators on the streets. Scores of government officials helped the Awami League leadership to maintain law and order and implement Mujib's directives during the noncooperation movement. A new setup of governmental bureaucracy evolved under the direction of Tajuddin Ahmed, general secretary of the Awami League, and Dr. Kamal Hossain, an adviser to Mujib.[3] Even the judiciary did not lag behind. On March 8, the chief justice of East Pakistan High Court, B. A. Siddique, refused to administer the oath of office to General Tikka Khan, Yahya's new governor-designee for East Pakistan (Nag 2006, 5185).[4] The military and paramilitary forces also extended full cooperation with Mujib's noncooperation movement. [5]

Most political leaders of East Pakistan also joined hands with Mujib and the Awami League. On March 17, addressing a public rally in Chittagong, Moulana Bhashani even urged Mujib to form a caretaker government, as *Bangla Desh* had already become independent.[6] Support for Mujib was total and absolute—none dared to oppose him, either in public or in private. Except right-wing fundamentalists, or other religion-based parties, all others openly extended their total and unconditional support. Thus, for the first time in a thousand-year history of *Bangalee*s, an indisputable national leader was born, one who would lead the nation to its independence.

The success of the noncooperation movement was so astounding and so complete that Rafi Raza, a close confidant of Bhutto who accompanied him in the crucial tripartite talks in Dhaka, remarked, “Never has an opposition, let alone under martial law, asserted such total control within a state.” The movement was so successful that Pakistan's veteran politician Wali Khan wondered, “Even Gandhi would have marveled it” (Raza 1997, 69).

At the same time, in West Pakistan, Bhutto castigated the Awami League for its disproportionate reaction to the postponing of the National Assembly session. He also floated dubious concepts of “two majority parties,” and “two prime ministers” in one country. Pakistan had two majority parties—the Awami League in East Pakistan and the PPP in West Pakistan—he argued, and the power of the center should be transferred to the majority parties of both wings;

and in the provinces, it should go to the majority parties of the respective provinces.[7]

Bhutto argued that since the Awami League's majority in the National Assembly did not include any representatives from West Pakistan, and, since the PPP truly represented the western wing of Pakistan as it had secured an electoral victory in Punjab and Sindh, exclusion of the PPP from the central government would tantamount to the exclusion of West Pakistan altogether.

Then, addressing a press conference in Karachi on March 15, Bhutto asserted "The rule of majority did not apply to Pakistan" due to the geographical distance between the two parts (*Dawn* March 16, 1971). Bhutto's convoluted assertions led some observers to believe that he had a wicked plan to divide the country so that he could rule West Pakistan (Syed 1992, 105) and he acted not only on his own or on behalf of his party alone, but also for the interests of Pakistan's powerful military establishment (Blood 2002, 144–145).

III. THE TRIPARTITE NEGOTIATIONS

In the midst of massively successful civil disobedience movement in East Pakistan, on March 15, Yahya came to Dhaka to negotiate with Mujib. He was greeted with black flags everywhere—there were anti-Pakistan demonstrations in front of his official residence in Dhaka as well. Mujib also greeted his arrival with a stern warning that the people of Bangladesh have "demonstrated in no uncertain terms they would die rather than surrender. ... The spirit of freedom cannot be extinguished. ... The struggle will continue with renewed vigor until our goal of emancipation is realized" (Singh *et al.* 1999, 247–248).

At the backdrop of highly explosive noncooperation movement, Yahya's dialogue with Mujib and the Awami League commenced the next day. Yahya was assisted by General Peerzada, Colonel Hasan, and Justice A. R. Cornelius, when Mujib was assisted by Awami League leaders Tajuddin Ahmed, Kamruzzaman, Mansur Ali, Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed, and Dr. Kamal Hossain.

The talks centered on the lifting of martial law and modalities for transferring power to elected representatives in the provinces. Mujib asked Yahya to carry on as president on an interim basis, rescind martial law immediately, transfer power to the elected representatives in provinces, and recast East Pakistan-central government relationship on the basis of six-point. In respect to relations between the other provinces and the central government, Mujib proposed that the 1962

constitution of Pakistan be followed with a provision for greater provincial autonomy.

The Awami League also proposed that Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) of East and West Pakistan would meet as separate committees—each would then submit its own report to the National Assembly within a stipulated time, and the National Assembly, in turn, would finalize a framework for continuing the union.[8]

Apparently, by March 20, a tentative agreement was reached between Mujib and Yahya to transfer power to elected representatives stipulating that martial law would be lifted, central and provincial cabinets will be appointed, central and provincial assemblies would be vested with legislative powers, East Pakistan would be given greater autonomy than other provinces; and implementation of all these stipulations would be based on further discussions. Accordingly, a draft proclamation was made ready with a call for the formation of central and provincial governments with elected representatives, defining center-Bangladesh relations on the basis of the six-point, and splitting of the National Assembly in two sessions, one to be held in Dhaka and the other in Islamabad (Chowdhury 1974, 172–178).

As Yahya sought to finalize the draft proclamation in a tripartite meeting along with Bhutto, he arrived in Dhaka on March 21 setting the stage for triangular talks. At the outset of the negotiations, on March 22, Bhutto, however, summarily rejected the proposals of the draft proclamation. He raised four major objections: (a) after the repeal of the martial law, the proposed proclamation would have no sanction if East Pakistan subsequently declared independence; (b) the new constitution must be approved by a majority of National Assembly in each wing of Pakistan; (c) adjustment of powers between the center and the provinces as outlined in the proclamation was not acceptable; and (d) there must be a joint session of the National Assembly, as opposed to the two separate sessions outlined in the draft proclamation.

Bhutto also emphasized that there must be a tripartite understanding among the elected majority parties and the military to resolve the deadlock as it was the military that would be asked to transfer power (*Dawn*, March 23, 1971). Among all the objections raised by Bhutto, the Awami League was, however, most surprised with his opposition to the provision for two separate sessions of parliament, which was indeed his own proposal.

The next day, on March 23, Mujib unveiled his draft constitution, which provided that: (a) the powers allocated to the center, with regard to the “State of

Bangla Desh" be confined to defense and foreign affairs, excluding foreign aid and trade; (b) the central government would have no power of taxation or control over any other source of revenue in Bangla Desh; (c) inter-wing trade, between Bangla Desh and West Pakistan, would be considered foreign trade; (d) Bangla Desh would have a separate central bank—the Reserve Bank of Bangla Desh; (e) there would be a complete separation of economic planning; and (f) the two constituent conventions would be free to frame any form of constitution by acting as sovereign bodies, and the president would be required to authenticate the proposed constitution (Chowdhury 1974, 172–179).

The draft constitution obviously left little room for continuation of a united Pakistan. Moreover, the Awami League demanded a proclamation from Yahya to this effect within 48 hours. Ironically, the ultimatum came on March 23, on Pakistan's National Day, a day that commemorated the Lahore Resolution (1940), which laid the foundation for a separate Muslim state in British India. In his address to the nation on this occasion, Yahya, however, expressed confidence that the negotiations would be successful and Pakistan would soon return to democracy. Mujib and the Awami League, on the other hand, observed March 23 as a "Resistance Day," when Pakistani flags and Pakistan's founding father Mohammad Ali Jinnah's portrait were burned en masse, the new flag of Bangladesh was hoisted throughout Bangladesh, including atop Mujib's own residence and several foreign missions in Dhaka.[9]

On March 24, Bhutto and Yahya met again in Dhaka as the Mujib team insisted on the implementation of Mujib-Yahya agreements. By then, the Mujib met Yahya six times, three times one-on-one and three times along with his advisory teams, while Bhutto met Yahya six times, mostly on one-on-one sessions (Muhith 1992, 222). The Mujib team was also expected to meet with the Yahya's team again on March 25 to modify some clauses before the final memorandum could be signed by all three leaders—Mujib, Yahya, and Bhutto—and a final announcement could be made to that effect by Yahya. But March 24 was the last day of the historic and rather melodramatic tripartite negotiations. Apparently the events of March 23—not allowing Pakistani flag to fly on the National Day, the unveiling of the Awami League's draft constitution, hoisting of Bangladeshi flag throughout East Pakistan—came as the death knell for the tripartite negotiations.

IV. THE MILITARY CRACKDOWN

The end of the fateful tripartite negotiations, however, did not come with a formal announcement. It rather came as a nightmare, as an apparently disgusted Yahya left Dhaka on the night of March 25 after giving orders to his military generals to crash the rebellion in East Pakistan under what is called Operation Searchlight. Although East Pakistan's governor Tikka Khan ordered the crackdown to commence at 01:00 hours on March 26 after Yahya's landing in Rawalpindi, his troops moved into the streets of Dhaka city one hour before (Jacob 1998, 33). Then a special military commando unit of Pakistani army led by two majors—Z. A. Khan and A. O. Mitha—arrested Mujib from his Dhanmondi residence in the early hours on March 26—between 1 and 2 a.m.—and whisked him away to Dhaka Cantonment.

On March 26, in an address to the nation from Rawalpindi, Yahya banned all political activities in Pakistan. The Awami League, thus stood banned as a political party. Describing Awami League's noncooperation movement as "an act of treason" and accusing the party of running "a parallel government," Yahya declared "Mujib's obstinacy, obduracy and absolute refusal to talk sense can lead to but one conclusion—the man and his party are enemies of Pakistan." He ordered the armed forces "to ensure the integrity, solidarity and security of Pakistan," and promised "Mujib's crime will not go unpunished" (Singh *et al.* 1999, 248–249).

V. THE ANATOMY OF THE GRAND FAILURE

The tumultuous events of March 15–25, 1971, and the colossal failure of the triangular negotiations thus literally shuddered the very foundation of Pakistan. Over the years and decades many questions have been raised in different circles about these momentous days and events. Some of the questions of critical historical significance are as follows. First, which of the three leaders—Bhutto, Mujib, and Yahya—was more instrumental than others for the failure of the negotiation; second, was the negotiation a ploy—did Pakistani military junta secretly prepare for a military crackdown while keeping the Awami League leadership engaged in good faith negotiations; third, on the fateful night of March 25, 1971, why did Mujib deliberately allow himself to be arrested instead of fleeing away and lead the rebel forces for the independence of Bangladesh; and fourth, did Mujib actually declare the independence of Bangladesh before his arrest and whether such a declaration prompted Pakistani authorities to place him under arrest.[10]

First, let us take the question of who was more responsible for the failure of the negotiation—Mujib, Bhutto, or Yahya? Obviously the events and developments of the negotiation period have been interpreted in various ways over the course of last four decades. Even all three the key players—Bhutto, Mujib, and Yahya—had diametrically opposite views of their respective roles in the negotiation.

In his March 26, 1971, address to the nation, Yahya squarely shifted the blame for the failure of the negotiation on the shoulders of an "indomitable Sheikh Mujib." But Yahya's own role as a neutral referee to make a transition to a constitutional government was questionable as well—did he show greater interest in the preservation of power of the military than facilitating a transfer of power to a civilian government, especially during the negotiation period? At the same time, many hold Mujib responsible for the failure of the negotiation as he stubbornly refused to accept nothing less than the six-point, which essentially envisaged a toothless confederation of Pakistan signifying the end of Pakistan as a unified country. On the other hand, many blame an overtly ambitious and clever Bhutto, whose unrestrained lust for power, dubious concepts of two majorities and two prime ministers in the same country, and procrastination in joining the National Assembly session, made any compromise all but impossible.

To Yahya, back in 1971, the obvious answer to the question was that it was Mujib, and Mujib alone. In his March 26 address to the nation, Yahya squarely held Mujib responsible for starting a noncooperation movement in defiance of lawful authority, insulting Pakistan's flag, defiling the photograph of Mohammad Ali Jinnah—the Father of Pakistan, and creating "turmoil, terror, and insecurity" in the country. Accusing Mujib of treason, Yahya declared that Mujib and his party were "enemies of Pakistan and they want East Pakistan to break away completely. ... We will not allow some power hungry and unpatriotic people to destroy this country."

In yet another national address on June 28, 1971, Yahya described Mujib's call for confederation a failed attempt to divide Pakistan into two or more sovereign states.[11] Then in the *White Paper,* published by the Pakistani government in August, 1971, he accused Mujib of refusing to protect the LFO in respect to the presidential veto power, and denying the federal government its jurisdiction over taxation, foreign aid, and foreign trade as well as monetary policy.

Given the developments of the period, it seems reasonable to infer that Mujib and his Awami League had indeed hardened their position immediately after they won a landslide in 1970 general election. Previously on several occasions

Mujib had indicated that his six-point was not set in stone and he was open to compromises. After the election, however, he and his party made it clear that the election was in fact a referendum on the six-point, and any effort to amend or tamper with it would result in dire consequences. Mujib even declared that if any province of Pakistan had problems with the six-point, it could frame its own constitution and go on in a separate way. He also rejected Yahya’s invitation to visit Rawalpindi following his election victory. The general election of 1970 shifted the center of power of Pakistan to Dhaka, but Mujib was supposed to lead the whole of Pakistan, not only East Pakistan. This could well be interpreted as lack of serious interest on his part in assuming the position of prime minister of a united Pakistan.

Moreover, the draft constitution that Mujib unveiled on March 23 may well be interpreted as a surefire recipe for disintegration of Pakistan. The proposed constitution denied the federal government of any power over taxation, revenue collection, trade, and currency in East Pakistan, and drastically curtailed federal government’s power over national defense. Then, by giving an ultimatum to the president of Pakistan to accept the proposed constitution within 48-hours and threatening dire consequences for noncomplying with the demand, Mujib removed the last vestiges of hope for any negotiated settlement.

Also, the ultimatum came when the Awami League and its supporters hoisted Bangladeshi flag and burned Pakistani flag along with Jinnah’s portrait on the National Day of Pakistan in the presence of the country’s president as well dozens of hawkish military generals. Even before that, the whole administration of East Pakistan was completely paralyzed by an overwhelmingly successful noncooperation movement when Mujib established his command over the entire governmental machinery of East Pakistan, including public officials, radio and television stations, as well as defense personnel, and asked the people of East Pakistan not to pay any taxes to the central government.[12]

Paradoxically, however, Mujib remained loyal to Pakistan till the end. He refrained from declaring independence in his historic address on March 7 at the Suhrawardy Uddayan although such a declaration was widely expected by all circles in Pakistan as well as abroad. Then, after the negotiation fell through, he called for a nation-wide strike, refraining himself from calling for independence of Bangladesh. Mujib kept hardliners of his party at bay hoping for a negotiated settlement and even when sky fell, nightmares of March 26 began to unfold, he did not escape arrest to join the rebel forces. His only sin, thus, appears to have centered on his inflexibility in respect to the six-point.[13]

To many, an overtly ambitious and clever Bhutto bore the brunt of the blame for the failure of the negotiations more than his cohorts. Bhutto was widely criticized for concocting the dubious concepts of “two majorities” and “two prime ministers” in the same country, and for his demand for transfer of power to majority parties in both the wings of Pakistan. Numerous of his statements could well be construed as his willingness to sacrifice anything, including the integrity of Pakistan, for the sake of his own political ambitions. It was Bhutto who famously declared that his party was not “prepared to occupy the opposition benches in the National Assembly,” that “no constitution could be framed, nor could any government at the center be run without my party’s cooperation,” and that the National Assembly session in Dhaka would be a “slaughter house” for West Pakistani legislators.

Bhutto’s claim that the Awami League had won a “provincial majority,” that due to the geographical distance between the two wings, the rule of the majority did not apply to Pakistan—all were part of what Blood (2002, 152) calls “spoiler game” aimed at refraining the Awami League from its legitimate rights to frame the constitution and form the central government in Pakistan. Evidently, Bhutto’s lust for power has always been unambiguous, especially since he won mandate in the militarily important provinces of Punjab and Sindh. He played hardball all along knowing full well that the Pakistani military was squarely behind him, and he could count on pervasive anti-Indian sentiment as well as anti-Mujib sentiment in West Pakistan. Dunbar (1972, 461), who derides Bhutto for the failure of negotiation, argues that Bhutto came up with all bizarre arguments to force Mujib to declare independence so that he could become head of government in the residual Pakistan.

Yahya also sharply criticized Bhutto during his trial before the Lahore High Court in 1978. Squarely putting the blame for disintegration of Pakistan on Bhutto, Yahya asserted, “I am of the view that if West Pakistan had elected a person with a little more vision and a little less greed for personal power, I would have had much less difficulty in keeping Pakistan together.” Yahya, however, maintained that the conflict between Mujib and Bhutto existed only on the surface—they both had been “conspirators and traitors,” who had “perfect congruence of objectives,” and had reached a consensus “to pull in opposite directions to accelerate the process of disintegration” of Pakistan. “Each wanted to take one wing of Pakistan away and set up his own private realm. The only difference I could see between them was that Bhutto wanted to retain the name of Pakistan for his truncated domain while Sheikh Mujib had coined a new, more

emotive one of his preserve—Bangla Desh" (Basit 1990, 124–136). Bhutto (1971), however, claimed that at one point Mujib asked him to become the prime minister of West Pakistan while he could be prime minister of East Pakistan, but he declined the offer.

There are, however, some observers who argue that criticisms against Bhutto "does not lie where his critics place it"—his actual fault lied rather with his "failure to tell the people the truth" that East Pakistan wanted to be independent and it could not be kept within Pakistan by force, and it would be prudent to let it go its own way peacefully (Syed 1992, 91–97). Another observer points out that since the beginning of the constitutional deadlock, Bhutto convinced military generals that it would be better for West Pakistan "to separate rather than remain with East Pakistan," and any constitutional scheme under the six-point would rather jeopardize Pakistan's armed forces and might cause West Pakistan to "repay all that they received in excess of their share in development and other sectors" (Ahmed 1979, 200).[14]

Was Yahya responsible for the failure? Yahya was a martial law administrator, who ruled the country with a military junta—all top officials of his cabinet were high-ranking military officials. He, however, granted political rights to the citizens, committed his government to hold a general election on the basis of universal adult franchise and making a democratic transition as soon as possible. His LFO, which provided framework for the transition, however, demonstrated excessive concern for safeguarding Islam as the state religion, maintaining territorial integrity of Pakistan, and authentication of the new constitution by the president. The LFO also failed to provide clear guidelines in regard to the parameters that would be necessary for a presidential authentication of the constitution, the modalities for counting the 120-day timeframe for framing the constitution, and any follow-up measures that could be necessary in case the president refused to authenticate the new constitution.

Such issues turned out to be highly critical immediately after the election. Evidently, while Bhutto demanded lifting of the 120-day limit on framing the constitution, Mujib demanded mandatory authentication of the new constitution by the president. Then, the National Assembly session was postponed repeatedly further breeding suspicion and uncertainty—none knew when the 120-day deadline clock would start ticking—would it start from the day of the election or from the first day of National Assembly session. The LFO also failed to specify the fate of the president of the country—would the democratically elected legislatures elect a new president or would it serve under the existing martial law

administrator.

Despite such limitations, arguably, it can be safety stated that Yahya largely maintained referee-type neutrality up until the completion of the general election (Ziring, 1974). The election results, however, came as a blow to both Yahya and his military junta. After all, they never expected the Awami League to win a landslide in East Pakistan and thus emerge as the majority party of the country. As no more it was possible to shrug off West Pakistan's overpowering concern over losing power to East Pakistan, and as Mujib's leadership of the central government was unacceptable to the military junta, quite understandably Yahya had to walk a tight rope. When he came to Dhaka for tripartite negotiations in mid-March 1971, Yahya knew well that his top military generals lacked the will to accept Mujib as the next leader of Pakistan.

At the same time, Bhutto, who enjoyed allegiance of many top generals of West Pakistan, advised Yahya to crash Mujib and his Awami League "by massive use of armed forces regardless of the number of civilian casualties or the world reaction to such moves" (Basit 1990, 61). Yahya took the side of his military junta and their trailblazer Bhutto. At the end, as Wilcox (1973, 22) puts it, Mujib had "a choice between national hegemony or provincial secession," Bhutto had a choice between "shared national power or West Pakistani secession," and the Pakistani army had a choice between "adequate support for national unity and defense or civil war." As it turned out, both Mujib and Bhutto made choices in favor of secession, and Yahya and the military junta made their choice in favor of a civil war.

The second question whether Pakistani army bought time under the guise of tripartite negotiation. The military crackdown in Dhaka, known as Operation Searchlight, began within hours of Yahya's departure for Rawalpindi in the evening of March 25.[15] The crackdown was massive in nature—military jeeps, tracks, tanks, and artillery rolled through streets of Dhaka with soldiers wielding automatic weapons. Such a level of preparedness for mounting a military assault in a matter of hours raised questions in some circles that the military junta might have secretly planned the crackdown while negotiating with the Awami League. Available studies also suggest that by the third week of March as many as 22 Pakistani generals, including all members of Yahya's inner cabinet, were in Dhaka "to fix the whole situation within 72 hours," and they finalized the Operation Searchlight in a meeting at Dhaka Cantonment on March 23, 1971 (Maniruzzaman 1988, 83–105).

Evidently, at the time of launching of the crackdown, there were five divisions

of West Pakistani army in Dhaka, of which three were brought in previous two months (Blood 2002, 178). Such a buildup of the Pakistani army in February and March 1971, immediately after the Awami League's victory in the general election, does indicate that the military junta made preparations to confront possible rebellion in Bangladesh way before the negotiation commenced. Some suggest that Pakistani military actually decided in favor of a crackdown by mid-February, following the Larkana meeting with Bhutto, but still continued dialogue with Mujib in order to buy time to build up military strength in East Pakistan and to demonstrate to the world that the military had tried the path of negotiation to resolve the political crisis (Raza 1997, 82).

But Pakistan government's official publication on the events of these days claims that the military attack on Dhaka came only after the government received information of "an armed rebellion," mounted by a rebel force with an estimated strength of 175,000 people (GOP 1971). Later, in 1978, in his testimony before the Lahore High Court, Yahya, unequivocally denied that the military crackdown on civilians on March 25–26 in Dhaka had been preplanned. Yahya claimed that the crackdown came as university and college dormitories in Dhaka were filled with nonstudents, "armed with machine guns and light automatics, and huge ammunition dumps," and as family members of West Pakistani soldiers were "butchered in significant numbers" (Basit, 1990). He also claimed that had there been any such plan, none of the Awami League leaders could escape arrest, and added that he had ordered Mujib's arrest with clear instructions that he be treated with respect as prime minister designate (GOP 1971).

What actually transpired in those crucial days of tripartite negotiations perhaps will remain controversial for a long period to come, but some of the developments of the period that could be accepted with reasonable certainty would include the following: (a) a considerable reinforcement of West Pakistani armed forces did take place during January–March; (b) there had been an unusual flurry of military activities and high-level military movements in East Pakistan coinciding the period of tripartite negotiations; (c) Pakistani military high command attempted to isolate and disarm *Bangalee* soldiers immediately before the crackdown; (d) the crackdown might have been triggered by Mujib's unveiling of a draft constitution, which called for a confederation of Pakistan with limited role of the central government as well as the military; (e) widespread acts of desecration of Pakistani flag, trampling of Jinnah's portraits, and hoisting of Bangladesh flag on Pakistan's National Day by the rebel forces

played on the nerve of Pakistani military junta; and finally (f) a de facto Bhutto-Yahya-military alliance did exist to resist Mujib and the Awami League—after all, the full brunt of Pakistani army's rage for the failure of tripartite talks fell on Mujib and the Awami League, while Bhutto was not only spared, he was actually safely escorted out to Karachi by the Pakistani military.

NOTES

1. The first flag of the country was designed by the country's eminent artist Qumrul Hasan—it had a red map of East Pakistan in a green background. The program of independence was reportedly drafted by a student leader named Sirajul Alam Khan. For more details, see Ahmed (1979, 204).

2. As mentioned before, the song "Amar Sonar Bangla," however, was originally composed and sang by Tagore in order to force the British government to rescind its 1905 division of Bengal. Tagore's intention in composing the song was not to rejoice the Partition of Bengal, but to resist it. For greater details see Ludden, 2003; Oren 1976, 21.

3. The makeshift bureaucracy comprised of career civil servants, such as A. M. Sanaul Huq and A. M. Anisuzzaman, and some academics, such as Nurul Islam and Rehman Sobhan. See Muhith (1992, 215) for more details.

4. In a twist of fate, the same Tikka Khan was sworn in as governor of East Pakistan on April 9, a month later, by the same judge, B. A. Siddique. Tikka Khan, who earlier earned the epithet of "Butcher of Baluchistan" thus replaced mild-mannered governor Admiral Ahsan. "If Bangalees were dismayed by Governor Ahsan's removal, they were close to being terrified by Tikka Khan's arrival," remarked Blood (2002, 160–161).

5. Reportedly, some *Bangalee* military officers even presented a plan to Mujib to launch military assault against West Pakistan, but Mujib turned it down (Ali 1994, 25).

6. Interestingly, in his testimony before the Lahore High Court on June 13, 1978, Yahya claimed that, before the 1970 elections, Bhashani asked him to forget about elections and run the country as a military dictator as long as he could (Basit 1990, 124). Chowdhury (1974, 101) points out that prior to the 1970 elections, Bhashani informed Yahya through an emissary that if Yahya postponed the election for taking care of the 1970 cyclone victims, his party would support Yahya, not Mujib.

7. In his address at the Nishtar Park, Karachi, on March 14, 1971, Bhutto declared, *Idhar hum, udhar tum* (we are here, you are there)—categorically meaning two Pakistans, one under his leadership and the other under Mujib. Bhutto asserted, "If power was to be transferred to the majority parties of the two wings, it should be given to the Awami League in East Pakistan and to the People's Party in West wing." *Dawn*, March 15, 1971.

8. For more details, see Bhutto (1971, 41–44), Chowdhury (1974, 171–77), Muhith (1992, 221–225), and Syed (1992, 103–107).

9. All foreign missions in Dhaka were asked to fly the flag of Bangladesh on that day, but only the Soviet and British missions hoisted the flag, while the Iranian, Indonesian, and Nepalese missions raised Pakistani flag. China also raised Pakistani flag, but later in the day, some students replaced it with Bangladeshi flag. Most of the other foreign missions in Dhaka, including the US embassy, did not fly any flag on that day (Blood 2002, 192).

10. The last two questions—why Mujib decided to get arrested, instead of escaping in order to lead the rebel forces, and who declared the independence of Bangladesh will be addressed in the last chapter.

11. For a complete version of Yahya's March 26, 1971, speech, see *Dawn*, Karachi, March 27, 1971, as well as Singh *et al.* (1999, 275–277).

12. Mujib's control over East Pakistan was so complete that on March 9, 1971, the *Daily Telegraph* reported, "Sheikh Mujibur Rahman appears to have declared the independence from Pakistan." Similarly, on March 15, 1971, *Time* magazine wrote, "Pakistan as it stands today is finished." Sheikh Hasina (2012, xxiii–xxiv) remarked, "The entire nation carried out Mujib's instructions. Every organization, including government offices, courts, banks, insurance companies, schools, colleges, mills and factories, obeyed his orders. … In reality, he ruled an independent Bangladesh from 7 March to 25 March."

13. A recent book on Mujib, written by a prominent journalist in Bangladesh, acknowledges that Mujib had kept hardliners of the Awami League at bay as he still had faith in negotiation, and also partly because of fear of a possible military crackdown by Pakistani army (Ahsan, 2014).

14. Even Ayub Khan also thought that separation of East Pakistan was a matter of time. He apparently told Altaf Gauhar that he gave the *Bangalee*s the second capital in Dhaka, because they would need it one day (Cloughley, 2016).

15. That the people Dhaka hardly expected such military crackdown can well be guessed from the fact that the same night several high court judges, along with their wives, were attending a dinner at the residence of US consul in Dhaka when Pakistani tanks rolled through the streets of the city (Blood 2002, 195).

Chapter 3

The Liberation War and the Emergence of Bangladesh

I. INTRODUCTION

The grand failure of the tripartite negotiation among the key players of Pakistani politics—Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and General Yahya Khan—followed by the arrest of Mujib, and a brutal military crackdown under the Operation Searchlight on the unarmed civilians in Dhaka on the midnight of March 25–26, 1971, by the Pakistani armed forces—were *proximas causas*, not *subjectam causas*, for the people of East Pakistan to take up arms for the liberation of their homeland. When the Operation Searchlight was launched, East Pakistan was already on the throes of a highly successful civil disobedience movement—ordinary people were inordinately primed to explode as a time bomb waiting to blast. Throughout the course of history the people missed numerous opportunities for attaining a distinct nationhood, the brutal military crackdown by West Pakistani military just released the spirit to finally realizing the perennial goal. The liberation war, which lasted just about nine months, eventually set the people free—the people of East Bengal for the first time in recorded history succeeded in achieving a distinct nationhood called Bangladesh.

This chapter is organized as follows: section 2 explains the declaration of independence; section 3 covers the formation and functioning of the Bangladesh government-in-exile, also known as the Mujibnagar government; section 4 describes military strategies and operations of the liberation war; section 5 sheds light on the surrender of Pakistani occupation forces and the eventual emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation.

II. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

According to the official documents of the Bangladesh liberation war, Sheikh Mujib had declared the independence of Bangladesh immediately before his arrest in the early hours of March 26, 1971. His declaration read as follows:

> This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved. (GOB 1982, Vol. III, 1)

Official documents also suggest that Mujib was able to send his message of the declaration of independence to Chittagong via wireless, and it was read out from the Chittagong Radio Station, then renamed Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Radio Station of Independent Bangladesh), by M. A. Hannan, secretary of the Chittagong district unit Awami League on behalf of Mujib at around 2:30 p.m. on March 26. Subsequently, Major Ziaur Rahman, a *Bangalee* military officer who was then second-in-command of the eighth battalion of the East Bengal Regiment (EBR) stationed in Chittagong, also read out the declaration from the same radio station on March 27. But as discussed in the last chapter, Zia’s declaration was very different from that of Hannan’s.

Subsequently, the official Proclamation of Independence of Bangladesh, adopted by the Bangladesh government-in-exile (Mujibnagar government) on April 17, 1971, acknowledged Mujib’s declaration as the official declaration of independence of the countr (Singh *et al.* 1999, I: 281–282). Then, the Fifteenth Amendment to the constitution, passed by the Sheikh Hasina government of Bangladesh in 2011, incorporated both the Declaration of Independence by Mujib and the Proclamation of Independence by the Mujibnagar government (discussed below) as integral parts of the Bangladesh constitution (GOB, 2015).

As elaborated in the last chapter, the declaration of independence, however, remains one of the most controversial and widely debated issues in the political discourse of Bangladesh, especially since the mid-1970s—after the assassination of Mujib in a blitzkrieg military coup and the assumption of power by General Ziaur Rahman.

III. THE MUJIBNAGAR GOVERNMENT

The liberation war of Bangladesh began by all means with the all-out armed assault on unarmed civilians of Dhaka city by the Pakistani military in the early

hours of March 26, 1971. The captive nation, however, had no military command structure or organized force to fight against Pakistani occupation forces at that time. During the period when a highly successful civil disobedience preceded and Mujib and his Awami League ran a parallel government in East Pakistan, there were some atrocities against non-*Bangalee*s who resisted their directives, but there were no tangible plans to confront any military assault. “There seem to have been no contingency plans at all in case Yahya decided to crush Bangla Desh by force, and resistance to the West Pakistani troops in those early days of March and April was almost non-existent” (Blair 1971, 2555).

Immediately after the crackdown, while Mujib was being flown to West Pakistan, in the absence of any contingency plan, many of the top leaders and activists of the Awami League and other pro-liberation political parties such as the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and the National Awami Party (NAP) factions led by Professor Muzaffar Ahmed and Moulana Bhashani took shelter in neighboring India. Top Awami League leaders, including Syed Nazrul Islam and Tajuddin Ahmed, the CPB chief Moni Sing, the NAP leaders Moulana Bhashani and Professor Muzaffar, and top student leaders, such as Abdur Rab, Nure-e-Alam Siddiquy, Shajahan Siraj, and Abdul Quddus Makhan, all crossed into India by early April.

The military crackdown also immediately resulted in the formation of the Mukti Bahini—freedom fighters—to free the country from the Pakistani occupation forces. Immediately after he reached Agartala—the capital of the Indian state of Tripura—Tajuddin Ahmed, secretary general of the Awami League, who had long been seen as the second-in-command of the Awami League, contacted the Indian government for possible military assistance for arming the freedom fighters. Reportedly, accompanied by Amirul Islam, a close associate of Mujib, and Rehman Sobhan, an economic adviser to the Awami League, Tajuddin had several meetings with high-level government officials in New Delhi as early as the first week of April. It was also reported that Tajuddin also had a one-to-one meeting with Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi.

Upon his return to Agartala on April 10, 1971, Tajuddin formed the Bangladesh government-in-exile with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as its president, Syed Nazrul Islam, a senior vice-president of the Awami League, as acting president, and he himself as the prime minister. On April 13, Tajuddin expanded his cabinet by including Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed, another senior vice-president of the Awami League, as minister for foreign affairs, Qumruzzaman,

secretary general of all-Pakistan Awami League, as minister of the interior, and Mansur Ali, a presidium member of the party, as finance minister.[1]

On April 11, 1971, in his address to the nation as the prime minister of the government-in-exile on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, Tajuddin declared that Bangla Desh had to declare complete independence from Pakistan due to treacheries and brutalities committed by General Yahya and Pakistani military who refused to accept the people's verdict as expressed in the general election of 1970. "Pakistan is dead and murdered by General Yahya—and independent Bangla Desh is a reality. … No power on earth can unmake this new nation and sooner or later both big and small powers will have to accept it into the world fraternity," Tajuddin asserted (*New York Times*, March 29, 1971). He also urged all "administrators, technicians and intellectuals and any other person anxious to join in the liberation struggle to come to the liberated areas and put their services at the disposal of the Government of Bangla Desh"; appealed to friendly governments and peoples as well as international agencies for humanitarian aid for freedom fighters and suspend all further deliveries of arms to Pakistani forces; and issued stern warnings to those who opposed the liberation war: "There should be no collaboration with the army of occupation. ... Those who are so blinded by fear or treachery to play this role, will be destroyed by the people themselves" (Singh *et al.* 1999, 283–286).

The Proclamation of Independence

The government-in-exile, later renamed as the Mujibnagar government—was formally installed in a ceremony on April 17, 1971, at a village called *Baiidyanathtala*, located in Meherpur under Chuadanga district in the northwestern part of Bangladesh.[2] Apparently, this mango-grove site was selected in memory of the Battle of Plassey in which Bengal lost its freedom to the British East India Company in 1757. About one hundred local and foreign journalists, driven to the location from Calcutta by the organizers, and several thousand local people, along with 45 parliamentary members, attended the function organized by local civil servants with the help of Indian security forces.[3]

One of the first acts of the Mujibnagar government was to establish a Constituent Assembly comprising all members of the Pakistan National Assembly and the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly who were elected in the 1970 general elections from the territory of Bangladesh on the Awami League's ticket. The Constituent Assembly, thus constituted, adopted the official Declaration of Independence of Bangladesh with retrospective effect from March 26, 1971, when Mujib, "the undisputed leader of the 75 million people of Bangladesh" duly made such a declaration (Singh *et al.* 1999, 281–282). Yusuf Ali, an MNA from Dinjapur, read out the declaration and administered the oath of office to the acting president of the government, who, in turn, administered oath to the other members of his government. The leaders of the Mujibnagar government left the site the same day, and subsequently the government was stationed in the Indian cities of Agartala and Calcutta. While the top political and military leadership of the government operated from Calcutta, the military operations were conducted from Agartala.

Exodus of Refugees to India

The military crackdown also immediately resulted in a mass exodus of people from Dhaka city as well as other parts of the country into neighboring India, which in addition to long-running political history, shares more than 1400 miles of porous borders with Bangladesh. The exodus intensified month after month, and by August 1971, about eight to nine million people from Bangladesh crossed into neighboring states of India. Most of the refugees were, however, Hindus, who shared religious affinity with the Indian population. According to official statistics, over seven million of the refugees were Hindus and just a little over half a million were Muslims. Most of the refugees took shelter in West Bengal (7.5 million), followed by Tripura (1.4 million), Meghalaya (over six thousand), Assam (about three thousand), and Bihar (about ten thousand).[4]

The relationships between Pakistan and India had never been friendly. Before millions of refugee poured into India, the two countries had already fought a full-scale war in 1965, and Pakistani authorities accused Sheikh Mujib twice for attempting to secede East Pakistan with Indian assistance—in Agartala Conspiracy Case in 1968 and while launching the military crackdown in Dhaka in 1971.[5] The refugee problem further worsened Indo-Pak relationship. Immediately after the military crackdown in Dhaka, on March 31, 1971, Indian parliament passed a unanimous resolution assuring "wholehearted sympathy and support" of the Indian people to the "struggle and sacrifice" of the people of East Pakistan (Singh et al. 1999, 672). Such a strong expression of "solidarity and identity of interests" between Indian people and that of East Pakistan, accompanied by open and inviting borders as well as allowing the formation and operation of the Bangladesh government-in-exile on Indian soil, further encouraged exodus of East Pakistani refugees into Indian territories. Official statistics show that the total inflow of refugees from East Pakistan reached the mark of 100,000 by the middle of April, 1971, and significantly accelerated only afterward (Kumar 1975, 490).

On the other hand, the continuing influx of millions of East Pakistani refugees had inevitable economic, political, social, religious, and security implications and repercussions on India—as refugees kept coming, those already in India felt insecure to return home, and India alone was unwilling to take the permanent responsibility for their maintenance. With such direct involvement in the crisis, India demanded cessation of any military solution to East Pakistan crisis, immediate stoppage of the flow of refugees, creation of enabling conditions in

East Pakistan for return of refugees back home in peace and security, and work out a political solution acceptable to East Pakistan (Kumar 1975, 490–491). According to American intelligence sources, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi's initial reaction to East Pakistani crisis was to give immediate recognition to a free Bangladesh and back the liberation struggle with military power, and in addition to continually arming the Mukti Bahini, as early as May 25, 1971, she "ordered her army to prepare a plan for rapid take-over of East Pakistan" (Warner 2005, 1105–1106).

IV. MILITARY STRATEGIES AND OPERATIONS

The Mujibnagar government appointed Mohammad Ataul Gani Osmani (1918–86), a retired military colonel of Pakistan army and a member of parliament, the chief-of-staff of the Mukti Bahini (Bangladesh Liberation Army) on April 10, 1971.[6] Osmani then appointed five zonal commanders from the members of the EBR and the East Pakistan Rifle (EPR) who crossed into India to join the liberation war. The zonal commanders were Major Khaled Mosharraf—Sylhet-Comilla region, Major Ziaur Rahman—Chittagong-Noakhali region, Major K. M. Safiullah—Mymensingh/Tangail region, Major Osman Chowdhury—Kushtia-Jessore region, and Major M. A. Jalil—Faridpur-Barisal-Khulna-Patuakhali region. By May 1971, the Indian government deputed two military officials—Major General Sarkar and Brigadier Das—to maintain liaison with the Mujibnagar government.

The Tellipara Document

The military operation of the liberation war was guided by a strategic plan called *Tellipara Document*, named after the village in the district of Sylhet where the document was finalized on April 7, 1971, in a meeting of top military commanders. Aside from General Osmani, the meeting was attended by three majors of the EBR—Khaled Mosharraf, K. M. Safiullah, and Ziaur Rahman, and two army captains—Nurul Islam and Moinul Huq Chowdhury (Maniruzzaman 1988, 112). Some reports, however, suggest that the meeting was also attended by Qazi Nuruzzaman, a retired major, and Abdur Rab, a retired colonel who was also a member of parliament (Muhith 1992, 268).

The *Tellipara Document* emphasized three-prong strategies for defeating Pakistani army: (a) a large guerrilla force, to be raised and trained, would liquidate collaborators of the Pakistan army, destroy communication lines to immobilize Pakistani forces, and engage in hit and run operations against convoys and isolated posts of the Pakistani forces to create perpetual tensions for them; (b) the regular units of Mukhti Bahini would be enlarged, divided into sector troops, and placed in different areas to give cover to guerrilla operations; and (c) the best material among the regular units of Mukti Bahini and guerrillas would be recruited to form a regular armed force that would launch full-scale direct attacks on the Pakistani forces once guerrillas and sector troops had demoralized them and cut of their lines of logistic support.

The *Tellipara Document* received approval of both the Mujibnagar government and the Indian armed forces, and subsequently, a massive program for recruiting guerillas from among the *Bangalee* youths was undertaken in the Indian states of West Bengal, Tripura, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Meghalaya under the supervision of the Awami League. East Pakistani refugees those who demonstrated loyalties to parties other than the Awami League were prevented from infiltrating into the Mukti Bahini. Once screened and indoctrinated by the Awami League, the youths were then given two to five weeks of training by the Indian army on guerilla warfare, mainly on the use of light automatic weapons, mortars, and explosives.

At the same time, by October, 1971, three brigades of professional armed troops, capable of launching frontal attacks on Pakistani strongholds, were raised. The forces were named the Z force, the K force, and the S force, after the name of their respective sector commanders—Ziaur Rahman, Khaled Mosharraf, and K. M. Safiullah.[7]

The Operational Phases of the War

The progress of the liberation war has been described by many close observers of the war. According to Chowdhury (1972, 158–169), the war progressed in five separate phases. During the first phase of spontaneous but uncoordinated resistance (March 26–May), inadequately trained and equipped Mukti Bahini fought against the vastly superior occupation forces of West Pakistan—they liberated many areas, but soon lost control of those areas to Pakistani forces. During the second phase of guerilla warfare (June and July), freedom fighters were organized and coordinated into three major groups: (a) regular troops, consisting of military personnel of the EBR; (b) sector troops, consisting of paramilitary forces of EPR, policemen, and Ansars; and (c) guerilla groups, consisting of students as well as ordinary people. During this phase guerrilla operations of trained commandos inflicted heavy casualties on Pakistani forces. It is during this stage, by mid-June, 1971, Pakistani authorities began blaming India for "not only training the Mukti Bahini, but also of actively supporting its infiltration with field artillery" (Simon 1973, 649).

During the third phase (August and September) guerrilla operations were further stepped-up as the war was marked by a rapid increase in the frequency and scale of the Mukti Bahini operations. According to Dixit (2002, 202–209), during this phase Indian government geared up its operational support to guerrillas by infiltrating Indian commandos and marines into East Pakistan. As the number of attacks and casualties increased, freedom fighters succeeded in terrorizing *Razakars* (antiliberation and pro-Pakistan militia) and demoralizing the Pakistani occupation forces. At this point, several areas within Bangladesh also came under the control of the Mukti Bahini as thousands of them equipped with weapons and explosives began to return to Bangladesh.

At the fourth phase, during October–December 3, the war began to see successes when the presence of the Mukti Bahini was felt across the country, including the capital city where many offices, buildings, and businesses came under guerilla attacks. During this phase, in late November, Indian troops made their first major incursion into East Pakistan in support of the Mukti Bahini.[8]

By then thousands of guerrillas and supporting troops actively operated inside Bangladesh territory. The guerrillas destroyed numerous army and police posts of East Pakistan and almost completely paralyzed the country's transport and communication system by blowing up countless bridges, uprooting railway lines, mining roads, and making the country's both ports—in Chittagong and Chalna—

largely nonfunctional.

The final phase of the war (December 3–16) came with joint operations of the guerrillas with the Indian forces, when a full-scale war broke out between India and Pakistan. The president of India declared national emergency, the Indian parliament granted emergency powers to Indira Gandhi's government, and India declared both air and naval blockade of both East and West Pakistan (LaPorte Jr. 1973, 105). Ultimately, a swift and decisive operation of the Joint Command of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian forces, formed on December 6, 1971, for "full-scale operations against the Pakistani armed forces in Bangladesh" (Warner 2005, 1110), succeeded in liberating the country.

The Number of Freedom Fighters

The exact strength of freedom fighters—the Mukti Bahini—is not known. The number of regular military, drawn from EBR, and paramilitary forces drawn from EPR, policeman, and Ansars was estimated to be around 15,000 by late March, 1971, when the insurgency began (Rashiduzzaman 1972, 191). Then the number swelled as numerous people crossed border and joined the Mukti Bahini throughout the liberation war period. Then, there were some independent freedom fighter groups. Most important among these groups was the *Mujib Bahini* organized by some close confidants of Mujib such as Tofayel Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Hoq Moni, Sirajul Alam Khan, A. S. M. Rab, and Abdur Razzak. The group consisted of seven to eight thousand college and university students who had personal loyalty to Mujib himself. Members of this group were trained at the Indian military academies in Dehra Dun (Uttar Pradesh) and Hahlong (Assam), and they operated largely outside the dominion of the Mujibnagar government. They had their own wireless system, special communications code, and direct links to the Indian military and the political authorities (Wilcox 1973, 38).

On top of them, there were some freedom fighter groups that operated from within Bangladesh. One such freedom fighter groups that received prominence during the war was the Kader Bahini, organized by Abdul Kader Siddiqui (popularly known as Tiger Siddiqui). The Kader Bahini, comprised of around 17,000 school and college students, earned great reputation for mounting attacks on Pakistani occupation forces in Tangail area. Other independent forces that worked from within Bangladesh territory included the Afsar Bahini in Mymensingh with a strength of about 3,500, and the Hemayet Bahini in Gopalgonj and Barisal with a strength of about 1,000. These groups relied on captured arms, but occasionally crossed borders to receive supplies.

The total strength of the Mukti Bahini is estimated to be in the range of 100,000 and 120,000 (see Table 3.1), but no consensus exists in this regard. For example, the Pakistan government claimed that the combined strength of the "secessionists" amounted to around 180,000 armed personnel (Rashiduzzaman 1972, 191). Jahan (1972, 200) estimated the total number of various factions of the Mukti Bahini between 100,000 and 200,000 armed men.

On December 16, 1971, the Pakistani military was forced to surrender at the Suhrawardy Uddayan, at the same spot where only nine months ago, Mujib gave a clarion call for the nation's freedom on March 7, 1971. By the end of the

liberation war, the Mukti Bahini killed more than 25,000 Pakistani military and paramilitary personnel, in addition to capturing 300 to 600 West Pakistani soldiers, when they lost approximately 2,000 of their own men (Maniruzzaman 1988, 122–138).

V. THE SURRENDER OF PAKISTANI FORCES

Several recent studies have documented how the liberation war of Bangladesh was played out in the regional context of long-standing Indo-Pak context, as well as in the global context of superpower rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union (Bass, 2013; Raghavan, 2013; Warner 2005). In August 1971, when the liberation war began to gain momentum, the former Soviet Union and India signed the Indo–Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, establishing strategic cooperation against common security threats born out of Sino-American and US-Pakistan ties. The next month, in September 1971, the former Soviet Union allegedly pressured India to form a multiparty consultative committee for the liberation war by accommodating Moulana Bhashani and Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, who led two factions of the NAP, and the Communist Party chief Moni Singh. All these leaders were sidelined since they took shelter in India in April, 1971, as the liberation war remained under exclusive control of the Indian forces and the Awami League.

Table 3.1 Strength of Mukti Bahini—Various Estimates

	Estimate 1	*Estimate 2*	*Estimate 3*
Total armed forces	100,000	100,000	118,000
Ganabahini	80,000	80,000	9,000
Regular forces	—	20,000	17,000
Mujib Bahini	8,000	8,000	17,000
Other guerilla forces (domestic)	30,000	30,000 to 40,000	65,000
Kader Bahini	5,000	17,000	—
Hemayet Bahini	1,000	1,000	—
Afsar Bahini	—	3,500	—

Notes: Estimate 1 is based on GOB (1982, Vol. 9, pp. 635–676); Estimate 2 is based on Muhith (1992, 276), and Estimate 3 is based on Gupta (1974, 381–383).
Source: Author's compilation from various sources.

At the same time, the US president Richard Nixon and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger were particularly keen to safeguard the integrity of Pakistan—they viewed the crisis in East Pakistan as an Indian war aimed at disintegration of its arch-rival Pakistan (Warner, 2005). They saw "good fellow" Yahya, "the most trusted messenger to Mao and Zhou in Beijing," instrumental

for their China policy (Wolpert 1987, 4),[9] which resulted in the sacrificing of the *Bangalee*s instead of offending Yahya and Beijing (Owen, 1972). Both Nixon and Kissinger saw an "Indian invasion of Bangladesh" in the same light as Hitler's reoccupation of the Rhineland, and in August 1971, they sought to establish a puppet government in East Pakistan with Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed at the helm in order to safeguard the integrity of Pakistan (Raghavan, 2013).

Then, when Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi visited White House on November 5, 1971, both Nixon and Kissinger pressed her for a political settlement, but Gandhi maintained that any such settlement would leave Pakistani troops in Bangladesh, prevent refugees from returning to their homeland, and leave India with an immense refugee problem (Wilcox 1973, 44–46).[10] Following her unsatisfactory meeting with Nixon, Gandhi approved "immediate plans for full-scale operations against the Pakistani armed forces in Bangladesh," on November 12, 1971, before her return from Washington (Dixit 2002, 209). Finally, Nixon and Kissinger secretly pleaded with China to menace India by moving troops to the Indian border so that East Pakistan could stay under Pakistani rule (Dallek, 2007).[11]

Still, a direct war between India and Pakistan—the second in six years—could not be prevented. On December 3, 1971, India began direct military intervention in the Bangladesh theater apparently in response to Pakistan's massive bombing in some key Indian cities earlier the same day. Indira Gandhi alleged that Pakistan bombed several Indian airfields, including Amritsar, Pathankot, Srinagar, Avantipur, Utterlai, Jodhpur, Ambala, and Agra.[12] Within hours of the Pakistani attack, India fought back fiercely, bombing six Pakistani airfields, including Mianwali, Sargodha, Rafiqui, and Risalwala. It was an unequal war—while India had the world's fifth largest air force with nearly 2,000 aircrafts and 38 squadrons, Pakistan had only 250 first-line aircrafts—most of which were old, some F-104s, French Mirages, Chinese MIG 19s, B-57 Bombers, Sabres, and T-33 jet trainers (Raza 1997, 133–34).

With the breakout of full-scale war, it took just about four days for the Indian Air Force (IAF) to destroy the only squadron of Sabre Jets of Pakistan that was deployed in East Pakistan at that time. Further attacks by IAF on December 4 and 5 knocked out all 11 airports in Bangladesh. At the same time, Indian Navy sieged the entire Bay of Bengal blocking Pakistan's access to the sea. Surrounded by the joint forces of the Mukti Bahini and the Indian military, the morale of the Pakistani forces broke down completely by December 6, and by

December 9, all Pakistani army divisions lost their coherence.

The same day, a BBC broadcast claimed that Amir Abdullah Khan Niazi, chief of the Eastern Command of Pakistan, left for West Pakistan deserting his troops. General Niazi, however, showed up at the Hotel Intercontinental (now Hotel Sheraton) in Dhaka the next day, on December 10, to claim that he had never left his forces and he was still in charge in East Pakistan, but Pakistani army never recovered. The same day, Indian troops and the Mukti Bahini advanced on the capital city of Dhaka, when an estimated 90,000 Pakistani troops already retreated to the capital.[13]

On December 10, governor of East Pakistan, A. M. Malik, made a last ditch effort for a ceasefire by proposing a political settlement to install the elected representatives East Pakistan to power. The proposal, which was mediated by UN Assistant Secretary-General Paul Mark Henry, was however contradicted by Pakistani authorities. Earlier, on December 5, 1971, a proposal placed by the United States at the UN Security Council for an immediate ceasefire between India and Pakistan and withdrawal of troops of both parties was also turned down as the former Soviet Union vetoed it. On December 14, 1971, the civilian government of East Pakistan collapsed completely when three Indian MIGs attacked governor's house in Dhaka. By then, East Pakistan's governor, along with his cabinet members and West Pakistani civil servants, already took shelter at the Hotel Intercontinental, a neutral zone established by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC).

In his last message to the Eastern Command, on December 15, Pakistan's president Yahya Khan sent the following message: "You have now reached a stage where further resistance is no longer humanly possible nor will it serve any useful purpose. ... You should now take all necessary measures to stop the fighting and preserve the lives of armed forces personnel, all those from West Pakistan and all loyal elements" (Salik 1997, 207). General Niazi took Yahya's message as an order to surrender—he apparently preferred to "take 90,000 prisoners of war to West Pakistan rather than face 90,000 widows and half a million orphans there" (Salik 1997, 208–213). On December 16, 1971, General Niazi signed the surrender document at a public ceremony at the Suhrawardy Uddayan in front of nearly a million jubilant spectators. Officially the surrender was made to General Jagjit Singh Aurora, general officer commanding-in-chief of the Indian and Bangladesh Forces in the Eastern Theater.

After signing the surrender document, visibly shocked General Niazi handed over his personal revolver to General Aurora.[14] The surrendered troops of

Pakistan, totaling 91,549, consisted of 81,278 army infantry, 7,721 military police and officers, 1,413 naval force, and 1,141 air force (Mukul 1996, 43). At the end, Pakistani army lost 8,000 soldiers, while Indian casualties stood at 1,421 killed, 4,058 wounded, and 56 missing or presumed killed. Pakistan lost 41 tanks, 50 guns/heavy mortars, 104 recoilless guns, 18 F86 aircraft, and a large number of watercraft, while India lost 14 aircraft and 24 tanks (Jacob 1997, 157).

The surrender of the Pakistani forces, however, generated some controversies over the years. Although the surrender instrument clearly states that the surrender was made to the Joint Command of Indian and Bangladesh forces, in all practical purposes, it looked like a surrender to the Indian military command alone. First of all, the so-called Joint Command was established only a few days ago—on December 6, 1971, after the Indian government formally recognized Bangladesh. Then the surrender ceremony was marked by overwhelming presence of the Indian forces and with equally striking absence of the Mukti Bahini. Neither General Osmani, chief of Mukti Bahini, nor any leader of the Mujibnagar government was present on this occasion.[15]

With the surrender of Niazi, Pakistan lost about a fifth of its territory and more than half of its population, and literally bankrupted its economy (La Porte Jr. 1972, 106). More importantly, between a quarter and a third of its army was in Indian and Bangladesh prison camps (Zirirng 1976, 330). Later in his memoir, Niazi (1988) blamed both Butto and Mujib for their readiness to divide the nation in order to gain power, but he also blamed both Bhutto and Yahya for pursuing different strategies behind the scenes, not allowing him to implement more aggressive campaign against insurgents, bluffing him of possible Chinese involvement in the war on behalf of Pakistan, and losing East Pakistan despite his defensive lines remained intact (Seig, 2002). Some Pakistanis, however, blamed the loss of Pakistan to “the devils that beset Pakistan”—India, the Western nations (the United States in particular through its CIA as well as unspecified Western writers and scholars), Russia, and Pakistan’s own mafia, consisting of dishonest industrialists, unscrupulous civil servants, and power-drunk generals (Mahmood 1972, 339).

On the other hand, the surrender of Pakistani forces instantly heralded India on world stage (Simon 1973; Burke 1973). With such a historic victory, its arch-enemy, Pakistan, was now cut into size, both physically and politically. The Two-Nations Theory, the very foundation of Pakistan, stood debunked; Pakistan’s capacity to be a source of inspiration to Indian Muslims or support

secessionist movement in Kashmir perilously undermined; and Pakistan's role as India's principal rival and irritant in the international field crippled significantly as well (Puri, 1971). Also, the leaders of secessionist movements of India lost a safe haven in Bangladesh, and the country remained pledge-bound to provide transit access to India to its insurgency-ridden northeastern states (Jacob 1998, 123).

The Liberation of Bangladesh

The surrender of Pakistani occupation forces had been a spectacularly electrifying event for the people of Bangladesh, which is permanently inscribed in the nation's memory as the penultimate Victory Day. It was twelve centuries ago, during the period of the Pala Dynasty, which ruled the land for four centuries (750–1150), when Bengal settled into a separate existence as a prosperous land with a stable government and trade relations (Tinker 1990, 9). Then with the military conquest into Bihar and toward the Deccan, the land emerged for first time in recorded history as "a single ethnic whole, possessing a distinct language, culture and ethos" (Sen 1986, 7). Then, Bengal came under Muslim rule in the mid-12th century (1150–1338), when it managed to maintain somewhat independent status for about two hundred years despite occasional challenges (Baxter 1984, 13).[16]

During the period when India came under foreign Muslim rule—under Persians, Afghans, and Turks—many "little Bengals" welded into a "Great Bengal." Then, when British took over Bengal in 1757 from Nawab Sirajuddoula, the last independent ruler of Bengal, it "inherited a politically united and culturally homogeneous Bengal" (Khan 1996, 3–4), but still the people's identity remained cloaked under ethnic and religious ambiguities (Costanzo 2004, 53).

During the British rule, in 1905, Lord Curzon divided Bengal along religious-communal lines. With the division, Dhaka, the capital of Muslim majority East Bengal, emerged from its "provincial backwaters to the exalted new status" and with Muslims hopes and dreams soaring, one year later, in 1906, the Indian Muslim League, which pioneered the partition of British India, was founded in Dhaka (Tinker 1990, 176). To Bengali Muslims, the division came as initial recognition of their cultural and political separation from the Hindu-majority population (Heitzman and Worden 1989). It was, in fact, the first occasion in the history when the Muslims of East Bengal had a separate geopolitical territory that could provide the foundation of a distinct nationhood. The division was, however, rescinded by the British in 1911 facing agitations from the powerful Hindus of West Bengal (Dowlah 2009, 4–7).[17] "Historians of Bangladesh will one day, no doubt trace the political roots of their nation, first born in 1971, to this seminal half-decade of precocious Bangladesh political consciousness" (Wolpert 1982, 87).

Then the Lahore Resolution (1940) of the Indian Muslim League, which called

for several Muslim states in post-British India, raised hopes for an independent country for the Muslims of East Bengal. The hopes were, however, dashed again in 1946, when the Muslim League passed the Pakistan Resolution calling for one Muslim state in post-British India. Then the nostalgia for creating a united Bengal was rekindled by H. S. Suhrawardy in 1946. If Jinnah could have his Pakistan and Gandhi and Nehru their Hindustan, there ought to be a separate independent state of Bengal consisting of Muslims and Hindus, the enthusiasts argued insisting that the Bengali language and culture constituted the basis of a single nation in spite of religious differences (Thomas 1996, 14). Of course, such hopes were dashed by the Partition of India in 1947, when East Bengal was amalgamated in the new state called Pakistan. But at no point of time during the united Pakistan period had there been any uncertainty about the desire of the people of East Pakistan to be free (Moraes, 1971; Chowdhury, 1972).

Thus, since at least the eighth-century AD, a possibility of a separate nationhood for Bengal—either for a greater Bengal along with the Hindus of West Bengal, or a separate land for the Muslims of East Bengal—had surfaced in various forms and shapes. The liberation war finally brought it to a reality for the people of East Bengal—eventually they succeeded in securing an independent geopolitical territory to foster their own distinct nationhood that evolved through episodic triumphs and setbacks as well as complex interplay of religious, cultural, and political crosscurrents ever since its embryonic formation in the eighth century (Dowlah 2009, 3–14; Varma and Narain, 1972).

The new nationhood is very distinct from the religion-based nationalism of Pakistan (it does not subscribe to pan-Islamic identity or Islamic fundamentalism) as well as the language-based nationalism of all *Bangalee*s (language is a component, not a defining characteristic of it), and the romantic vision of nationalism of greater Bengal (it does not aspire to embrace *Bangalee*-Hindus of West Bengal). The nationhood squarely rests on the politics, economics, language, and culture that emerged in the geopolitical territory that constituted East Pakistan as a result of Redcliff’s demarcation of Bengal in 1947.

The Bangladesh liberation war also came as a triumph over religion-based nationalism and for struggles against colonialism. It has successfully repudiated the so-called “Two-Nations Theory”—it proved that religion is an inadequate basis for nationhood (Brands 1971). The liberation also signified a triumph over “internal colonialism,” the root cause of the break-up of Pakistan was concentration of economic and political power in the hands of West Pakistanis who used East Pakistan as a captive market. The liberation of Bangladesh

liberation came as a triumph of democracy—the will of the majority could not be crushed by the power of bullet (Ayoob and Subrahmanyam 1972).

More importantly, Bangladesh liberation came as a triumph for secessionist movements—it was the first in newly independent states that had emerged following the processes of decolonization with illogical boundaries. The liberation also came in the midst of regional and global power play. While China and the United States sided with Pakistan opposing any secession of East Pakistan (Owen 1972), India and the former Soviet Union actively assisted liberation of Bangladesh. India granted sanctuary to the East Pakistani refugees and political asylum to the Bangladesh government-in-exile, allowed its territory for recruitment and training of guerrilla forces, trained and armed Bangladesh freedom fighters, assisted them in fighting Pakistani occupation forces, and finally invaded East Pakistan to cause Pakistan's dismemberment (Islam 1985; Mahmood 1972). Former Soviet Union also pledged its assistance to freedom fighters of East Pakistan as early as July 1971 (Kissinger 1979, 859–860), and began airlifting of military material to replenish the Indian armed forces' stocks and ammunitions by the end of October, 1971 (Dixit 2002, 184).

The liberation war undoubtedly cost countless lives, beginning with widely acknowledged genocide on the night of military crackdown on unarmed civilians in March, 1971. No genuine effort was, however, ever made to ascertain the actual number of war casualties. But immediately after the war, on January 10, 1972, on the occasion of his homecoming from Pakistani prison, Mujib made an off-the-cuff declaration at the Suhrawardy Uddayan that the liberation war cost the nation about three-and-a-half-million lives (*Daily Telegraph* January 11, 1972). Apparently, Mujib picked up the number of casualties from Soviet *Pravda*, which cited the figure at three million in its January 3, 1972 issue, or some Indian intelligence sources (Ziring 1994, 83). Officially Bangladesh still claims the number of war casualties at three million, but as elaborated in the last chapter, such a high number of deaths in a war that lasted just about nine months, remains highly controversial.

NOTES

1. Reportedly, Tajuddin's claim to the premier position was challenged by Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed and another Awami League leader named Qumruzzaman. See Ahmed (1979, 243–244) and Muhith (1992, 258–276) for detailed discussions on the formation of the government-in-exile. Ahmed (1979, 242–243), however, maintains that Tajuddin actually formed the government while he was in New Delhi.

Interestingly, the then chief-of-staff of India's Eastern Army, General J. Jacob (1998) claims that Tajuddin formed the government-in-exile as per his advice.

2. M. R. Akhter Mukul (1996, 115), director of information and publicity for the Mujibnagar government, who earned a great reputation during the war for his *Charampatra* (the ultimatum) program broadcasted from Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, however, maintains that the actual name of the village was *Bhaberpara.*

3. There are conflicting reports in regard to organizers of the function. Mukul (1996, 115) claims that the function was organized by the then sub-divisional officer of Meherpur, Toufiq Elahi Chowdhury, and a police superintendent named Mahbubuddin Ahmed. Jacob (1998, 41), however, claims that the function was organized by the Indian BSF, "unfortunately, some foreign correspondents stayed behind and saw the BSF removing the chairs."

4. Actual number of refugees should be little higher than official estimates as most of the refugees were Hindus who had relatives in India and could easily assimilate themselves in the society. Also, among the refugee populations were the *Bihari* Muslims who were among the first to leave East Pakistan due to pre-March 25, 1971, developments (*Washington Post*, June 11, 1971). In August, 1971, the Indian government put the refugee expenditures at $576 million, of which $146.8 million came as international assistance. See Singh *et al.* (2002, 81) for more details.

5. Of course, India and Pakistan had an undeclared war immediately after the partition of British India, over the Kashmir issue that raged for 3 years, 1947–49, the ceasefire line arranged by the UN still remains the de facto border between the countries (Wolpert 1987, 4).

6. Initially, the liberation army was called the Mukti Fauj, and then in July, 1971, it was renamed the Mukti Bahini, as the word *Fauj* sounded akin to West Pakistani vocabulary.

7. The discussion on the *Tellipara Document* is largely based on Maniruzzaman (1988, 112–116) and Muhith (1992, 268–270).

8. It was such incursions that prompted President Nixon to send personal messages to both Indira Gandhi and Yahya Khan to end the hostilities, to which Yahya responded favorably but Gandhi did not (La Porte, Jr. 1972, 104).

9. It is notable that Ayub Khan was in the good book with the United States as well, but up until 1962 when the relationship came under strain. During Indo-China war, Ayub failed to respond positively when President Kennedy suggested him to cooperate with India in order to enable India to deal with the China threat. Ayub insisted that unless the Kashmir dispute was settled on equitable terms there could be no cooperation with India (Gauhar 1985, 112).

10. White House transcripts released in July, 2005, indicate that when President Nixon remarked that Indians were "a slippery, treacherous people," Kissinger quipped back, "The Indians are bastards anyway. They are starting a war there." See Bass (2013), Raghavan (2013), and Warner (2005) for greater details how driven by Cold War realpolitik, Nixon and Kissinger actively helped the Pakistani government, and how bitterly they disliked India and Indira Gandhi.

11. Sobhan (2016), however, claims that the Chinese government secretly informed the Mujibnagar government that it would not opt for any such military intervention to block independence of Bangladesh, although it might still continue its military supplies to Pakistan. Sobhan also maintains that such a stance of China might have facilitated India's military intervention in East Pakistan in 1971. But Indian army chief of Eastern Command in 1971, General Sam Manekshaw, went on record to state that his decision to launch the offensive into East Pakistan in the winter was motivated by Chinese army's inability to intervene effectively because the Himalayan passes were closed by snow after early November. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Manekshaw (accessed on May 8, 2016).

12. In her letter to Nixon on December 15, 1971, Indira Gandhi squarely blamed Pakistan for drawing India into the conflict. She wrote, "Despite the continued defiance by the rulers of Pakistan of the most elementary facts of life, we would still have tried our hardest to retrain the mounting pressure as we had for nine months." See Khan (1999, 743–745).

13. A *New York Times* report of December 10, 1972, sketched the picture vividly: “Every Pakistani fighter aircraft in East Pakistan is said to have been shot down, the river and sea escape routes were blocked by the Indian navy and air force; the Indian army was pushing the largest concentration of Pakistan inexorably toward Dhaka and the Bay of Bengal.”

14. General Niazi’s .38 caliber revolver has, however, sparked quite a controversy. Jacob (1998, 148) maintains that after careful examination of the revolver he came to the conclusion that the weapon could not have belonged to Niazi. He wrote, “The barrel was chocked with muck and apparently had not been cleaned for a considerable amount of time. The lanyard was dirty and frayed in parts. This was not the personal weapon of a Commanding General.” Jacob thought Niazi must have picked it up from one of his military policemen and surrendered it as his own.

15. The only person who represented the government-in-exile at the surrender ceremony was A. K. Khandker, deputy chief-of-staff of the Mukti Bahini. Indian forces claimed that the helicopter that was sent to pick up General Osmani for the surrender ceremony was damaged en route by hostile fire (Jacob 1998, 147). But, according to Zafarullah, who was with Osmani at that time, Osmani was eagerly waiting in Comilla to join the surrender ceremony, but failing to obtain clearance from the Mujibnagar government, he then headed to his home district Sylhet, where his helicopter caught fire before landing (*New Age*, December 16, 2014). Another close observer of the development suggests that Osmani always had difficult relationships with his Indian counterparts and refused to attend the function, and then Tajuddin deputed A. K. Khandker to join the ceremony (Mukul 1996, 43).

16. In the seventeenth–eighteenth-century Bengal was a rice country, a net exporter of food to other provinces and the biggest contributor of taxes to the central government. It was nearly independent—it enjoyed *Diwani* status under powerful Muslim rulers—the *Nawabs*—when it was a major stopover on the voyage to China and became object of every major power’s desire. The Eastern Bengal, the lower delta region, “has been the most daring and most pioneering success of Islamic civilization in India—it successfully contributed to the creation of wealth, education and peaceful religious conversion of the richest place in India” (Costanzo 2004, 53).

17. Historiographic accounts of cultural divide between the peoples of East Bengal and West Bengal suggest that although both shared the same common past and common rulers, they maintained separate identities from as early as the sixth-century AD, when eastern Bengal was known as “Vanga” and the western Bengal was called “Gauda.” While the inhabitants of Gauda easily succumbed to foreign invasion and provided least resistance to imperial powers, the Mongoloid, Buddhist inhabitants of Vanga were freedom loving and resisted foreign invasion (Nag 2006; Ahmed, 1975).

Chapter 4

The Mujib Regime

Major Political Measures

I. INTRODUCTION

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the undisputed supreme leader of the nation, got arrested voluntarily in the early hours of March 26, 1971. Immediately afterward, he was whisked away to Layalpur prison in West Pakistan, where he was imprisoned until his release on January 10, 1972, by Pakistan's newly appointed president Zulfiker Ali Bhutto. Mujib thus did not lead or witness the country's liberation war, which was eventually fought and won by a captive nation in his conspicuous absence. He returned to Dhaka from Pakistani prison on January 10, 1972, about three weeks after the historic surrender of the Pakistani occupation forces, about two weeks after the Mujibnagar government returned to Dhaka, and two days after he was released from prison.[1]

Mujib returned to Dhaka en route Heathrow Airport, where he was visited by British prime minister Edward Heath. He also had a stopover in New Delhi, where he was accorded a ceremonial reception as a head of state by Indian president V. V. Giri and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi.[2] Mujib returned home as the supreme leader of the nation with unmatched command over hearts and minds of his people. Several million people gathered at his historic reception at the Suhrawardy Uddayan, where only nine months earlier he gave a clarion call for the nation's freedom.[3] His homecoming address was brief and emotional —“My Bangladesh is free. My life-long desire is fulfilled,” a sobbing Mujib told jubilant millions. Pointing to Pakistan, he declared, “You have killed millions of my countrymen, dishonored our mothers and sisters, burnt innumerable houses, and driven away ten million of my people to India. … Even so, I do not harbor any hatred against you. You have your independence, let us have our independence.”[4]

On January 12, 1972, within 48 hours of his return, Mujib assumed power as the prime minister of a newly formed government. Earlier, the Mujibnagar government headed by Tajuddin Ahmed stepped down to pave the way. Mujib

changed the form of government to Westminster-style as he was not comfortable with a titular head of state position assigned to him by the Mujibnagar government. He picked Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, a former high court judge, for the ceremonial position of president, and installed a 23-member cabinet, which included all five cabinet members of the Mujibnagar government: Tajuddin as finance minister, Syed Nazrul Islam as ministry for industries, Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed as minister for trade, and Abdus Samad Azad as foreign minister. Mujib's cabinet also included Barrister Kamal Hossain as law minister and two members of the Hindu community—Phani Bhushan Majumder and Manoranjan Dhar, in recognition of their unrelenting support to the Awami League (Baxter 1984, 88–89). Mujib, however, brushed aside demands for a national government to ensuring broader representation in the postliberation government, and included no member in his cabinet from any other party than his own Awami League.[5]

Mujib thus assumed leadership of a newly born country whose liberation war he neither witnessed nor controlled. He was neither aware of the political transformation of the people nor of the freedom fighters during the war period, and neither did he understand the sufferings of the war-torn people in real time.[6] The people he found in the newly liberated country were strikingly different from the one that he left when he surrendered to the Pakistani army just a year ago. The liberation war cost numerous lives, millions suffered untold atrocities in the hands of the Pakistani occupation forces, and the liberation was achieved through a guerrilla warfare that hinged on sustained support of the ordinary masses further elevating their political consciousness.

This chapter explains major political and administrative measures that the Mujib regime undertook after the liberation to restore law and order in the country and to stabilize its political authority. The next section explains the measures that the regime undertook to disarm the freedom fighters and deal with the collaborators—those who opposed the liberation war by taking side with occupation forces. Section 3 sheds light on the regime's efforts to reorganize the country's civil bureaucracy. Section 4 explains how the regime launched a paramilitary force called the Rakkhi Bahini by marginalizing the country's regular armed forces. Section 5 explains the regime's framing of a new constitution and holding of a general election. Section 6 explains the regime's foreign relations—how it dealt with the Pakistani prisoners of war (POWs) and how it secured international recognitions for the newly independent nation.

II. DISARMING FREEDOM FIGHTERS AND DEALING WITH COLLABORATORS

Disarming the Freedom Fighters

Understandably, restoration of law and order in a war-torn, newly independent lawless country had been a formidable challenge for the regime. Unfortunately, the biggest challenge in this regard came from the freedom fighters—the Mukti Bahini. Given the political and administrative vacuum immediately after the war, many of the Mukti Bahini leaders established themselves as warlords in many localities in the country and some, of course, resorted to settle old scores against personal and family enemies, and engaged themselves in looting and plundering of private and public properties (Heitzman and Worden 1989). A significant segment of the war-hardened freedom fighters, however, sought to shape the new nation's future political developments along the ideological lines that were different from those of the regime, while some questioned the regime's legitimacy to claim power arguing that the Mujibnagar government might have provided support and logistics for the war with Indian assistance, but many of those leaders were not actual freedom fighters (Ahmed 1991, 46). On top of that, Mukti Bahini had access to more sophisticated arms and ammunition than the country's paramilitary forces.

On January 17, 1972, within a week of his assumption of power, Mujib ordered the Mukti Bahini members to surrender their arms within 10 days, decreeing illegal any possession of arms and weapons beyond the deadline. In return, Mujib promised them government jobs in national reconstruction, defense, national militia, and law enforcement agencies. Although the deadline was extended several times, very limited success was achieved. Speculations spawned that the regime sought to recover arms only from those freedom fighters who opposed the regime, not from its supporters. Kader Siddiquy, a staunch supporter of Mujib, for example, surrendered only about 30,000 guns at a widely publicized ceremony in Tangail, while his forces allegedly possessed more than 100,000 guns (Ali 1994, 13–15).

Then, a section of freedom fighters saw the regime's call to surrender arms as a ploy to take away "their only possession which provided them status and authority" (Ahmed 1991, 48). Such suspicions gained grounds as the regime placed party activists and leaders in key positions while denying opportunities to freedom fighters who belonged to other parties. Many freedom fighters also resented the regime for reinstating the old bureaucracy—officials who switched their allegiance back to Bangladesh after the country won independence. Such reinstatement also exposed many freedom fighters "to possible victimization by the turncoat police and district officers who had only recently been targets of the

guerrillas" (Mascarenhas 1986, 23). At the same time, attempts were made by corrupt political leaders and turncoat bureaucrats to consolidate their culpable hold on state power by tarnishing the image of the freedom fighters.

In August, 1972, the regime established what is called Muktijoddah Kaillyan Trust (Welfare Trust for Freedom Fighters) for the welfare of Mukti Bahini and their dependents. At the same time, the regime granted freedom fighters two years of seniority in government services and quotas in civil and military services as well as educational institutions. Such a lucrative package, however, instantly created a huge black market in the country for freedom fighter certificates. Although by all available accounts the Mukti Bahini's strength was less than 100,000, and including the military and paramilitary personnel who fought in the war, the total number of freedom fighters could not exceed 200,000 (see Table 3.1), the regime issued more than 1.1 million certificates. As a result, many non-freedom fighters, including Razakars, were also able to obtain certificates as freedom fighters.[7]

Such grand-scale bungling of Mukti Bahini certificates led to a three-way breakup of freedom fighters. The left-leaning elements of the Awami League' student wing—the Chhatra League—launched a new party called the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) under the leadership of Sirajul Alam Khan and A. S. M. Abdur Rab. The party sought to establish what they dubbed "scientific socialism." Another faction of the Chhatra League remained loyal to Mujib under the banners of "Mujibbad"—a political doctrine attributed to Mujib. A less enlightened segment of the freedom fighters resorted to antisocial activities, such as robbery, extortion, looting, hijacking, and kidnapping. As a result, in the first 16 months of the nation's liberation, there were over 18,000 cases of hijacking, more than 10,000 cases of robbery, and more than 2,000 cases of secret killings.[8] It was precisely this group that turned the "much heralded freedom fighters" into "a terrorist menace," which "undermined the foundations of the republic" (Ziring 1994, 89).

Dealing with the Collaborators

Every war of independence creates collaborators—those who oppose the war and take side with the occupying power—the liberation war of Bangladesh was no exception. One segment of the population joined hands with the Pakistani occupation forces and collaborated with their campaigns of killings, tortures, and lootings, and above all, raping of women. Obviously, after the liberation, the collaborators—known as Razakars, Al-Badrs, Al-Shams, and Shanti Committee members—became immediate targets of vengeance of the pro-liberation forces. Many of them were killed, tortured, or harassed without mercy, and without any recourse to law. Often they were victims of personal or family animosities and their properties were looted or confiscated illegally. At the same time, a sizable number of the collaborators were able to instantly turn themselves into "freedom fighters" with the help of powerful friends and relatives, or through freedom fighter certificates sold in black markets. Even after four decades of the war, the country still does not have a credible list of its freedom fighters.

By the end of January 1972, the Mujib regime promulgated the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order, 1972, providing a legal framework for the trial of antiliberation elements. Anybody who "individually or as members of some organizations" directly or indirectly aided or abetted the Pakistan armed forces "in committing genocide and atrocities against men, women and children and the person, property and honor of the civilian population of Bangladesh" was deemed a collaborator. The law allowed arrests without warrant of anybody who helped Pakistani occupation forces "by words, signs or conduct," and sanctioned punishments included confiscation of properties, imprisonment for not less than three years, and death sentence. Subsequently, the law was amended to provide that the accused or indicted had no right to appeal, but prosecutors had the right to appeal an order of acquittal (Ahmed 1991, 51–62).

The Collaborator Order came as a blessing for antiliberation elements, as in the absence of any law before many of them were helpless victims in the hands of vested quarters. It was especially helpful for the Biharis—a minority community of around 300,000–800,000 Urdu-speaking Muslim refugees who sided with the Pakistani occupation forces during the war.[9] Many of them were brutally killed and tortured, and much of their properties were looted in the midst of mass hysteria in the immediate aftermath of the war. The law also opened floodgates for corruption and blackmailing by the ruling power.

The regime's handling of the collaborators did not draw much criticism at that

time as most of the ordinary people were clearly indignant of numerous heinous acts committed by them during the war. Some observers, however, noted that often authorities failed to separate those people who extended cooperation to Pakistan for the sake of protecting their families in an occupied country (Khan 1972).[10] Moreover, the country's independence was attained through a guerrilla warfare—many ordinary people within the country provided guerrillas with much-needed shelter and crucial information for their operations. Such people were no less freedom fighters than those who crossed borders into India to join the Mukti Bahini. Worse still, many collaborators were tried by officials who themselves collaborated with the Pakistani forces during the war and then switched their allegiance to Bangladesh after the independence. A foreign journalist, who witnessed many such trials, described such courts as a "mockery of justice."[11]

The actual number of people arrested or prosecuted under the Collaborator Order still remains unknown, but the Mujib regime put the number of arrests to 41,800 in October, 1972, when prosecution of antiliberation elements was abandoned. Apparently, the process was abandoned to stem rising belief that the collaborator law was framed and implemented at the instigation of India to discredit pro-Islamic and anti-Indian elements in the country (Ahmed 1991, 62). The regime set up a total of 73 special tribunals throughout the country for trial of antiliberation elements, which dealt with 37,471 cases, of which 2,848 were dismissed, 752 persons received jail sentences of various lengths, and only one person was sentenced to death.[12]

Eventually, on December 16, 1973, on the occasion of the second anniversary of the nation's Victory Day, Mujib granted amnesty to all collaborators—convicted, detained, or jailed.[13] Besides political considerations of settling outstanding issues with Pakistan, such as repatriation of *Bangalee*s stranded in Pakistan, division of national assets, and the question of Pakistan's recognition to Bangladesh, the amnesty to collaborators en masse also resulted from lack of evidence, lax judicial procedures, and legal loopholes (Silva 2013, 75). At the end, the regime had in its custody only those against whom it had criminal charges of rape and murders. As discussed in the last chapter, the amnesty granted by the regime was, however, reversed after more than three decades by Sheikh Hasina government when many prominent antiliberation elements were brought to trial.

III. REORGANIZATION OF CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACY

Bangladesh inherited a governmental bureaucracy stained by British colonial legacy. Despite many reform efforts, fundamental character of the bureaucracy to behave like master didn't change much during the Pakistan period. An overwhelming majority of the people, including many politicians such as Mujib and Moulana Bhashani, were extremely critical of the bureaucracy's ostentation and mode of operation.[14] The Awami League had long been committed to reform bureaucracy—after all, the party represented the interests of burgeoning middle class and thrived on massive supports of mid-and lower-ranking government employees. The party's commitment to reform bureaucracy deepened further as many senior bureaucrats were "utterly selfish, opportunistic and alienated from the mainstream of the national upsurge," and allied themselves with the Pakistani forces during the war (Mascarenhas 1986, 15).

Mujib, however, surprised all by reinstating the East Pakistani bureaucracy en masse knowing full well that overwhelming majority of them—believed to be more than 80 percent—collaborated with Pakistan (Ali 1994, 105). Apparently, constrained by the immediate need for trained and experienced civil servants, he pursued a policy of "forgive and forget" (Baxter 1982, 74). For the rank and file of the bureaucracy, however, Mujib's policy of forgiving and forgetting did not bode well. Soon several factional groups emerged in the bureaucracy: (a) collaborators—those who cooperated with the Pakistan; (b) Mujibnagar employees—those who crossed border to take part in the war; (c) repatriates—those who repatriated from Pakistan after the war; and finally (d) the so-called 16th Division—those who changed loyalty to Bangladesh after the country's independence (Jahan 1987, 93).

Immediately after the war, the pro-liberation stream, who served as freedom fighters or as officials of the Mujibnagar government, occupied important administrative positions and received accelerated promotions, and the Tajuddin government dismissed more than 50 senior government officials who collaborated with Pakistan. Mujib, however, reinstated all but two of them,[15] and ordered many officials of the Mujibnagar government to return to their prewar positions. Mujib also upgraded all existing administrative subdivisions into districts, and merged the former central and provincial civil service cadres—known as the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) and the East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS)—into one unified civil service named the Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS).

The regime also decreed the Government of Bangladesh (Services) Order of

1972, known as Presidential Order 9, empowering the government to dismiss any civil servant at its will. This order not only significantly tightened political control over the civil service, but also literally wiped out any job security that the civil servants enjoyed traditionally. The regime justified such a sweeping measure in the name of ensuring effective compliance of the civil servants in the urgent task of national reconstruction. In reality, however, many civil servants were axed for political reasons. Morale of the administrative services eroded further in 1973 when the regime splintered bureaucracy into two broad cadres—a generalist service and a developmental service—which invoked age-old generalist-specialists controversy.

IV. FORMATION OF THE RAKKHI BAHINI AND MARGINALIZATION OF REGULAR ARMY

Formation of the Rakkhi Bahini

To confront recalcitrant freedom fighters who had superior military training and sophisticated weapons than governmental law-enforcing agencies such as the police and the BDR (Bangladesh Rifles), and apparently to discourage the formation of a strong regular army in the country, in February 1972, the Mujib regime launched a new paramilitary force called the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini. Equipped with modern weapons, the Bahini worked directly under the command of Mujib and his close confidants, and the members of the force took oaths of personal loyalty to Mujib himself. The Bahini at the outset absorbed around 8,000 freedom fighters, who "served as a parallel and rival group (of regular military) pledged to Mujib rather than the nation at large" (Baxter 1982, 75). Initially the force was deployed to curb smuggling, illegal hoarding, recover illegal arms, as well as fighting against the left-leaning fighters in the northern parts of the country and the tribal insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, but subsequently the force was directed mainly to crash political opposition.

The members of the Bahini enjoyed complete immunity for their actions from scrutiny by the courts (Amnesty International 1974). The Bahini had no rules of business, nor was it required to follow legal procedures in arresting or torturing people, or search or seizure of properties (Ahmed 1991, 63). As a consequence, the atrocities and excesses committed by the Bahini soon earned it a universal bad name as private army of Mujib and the Awami League. Mascarenhas (1986, 37) described it as "a sort of private army of bully boys not far removed from the Nazi Brown Shirts … freely used to crush opponents and critics of Mujib and the Awami League … completely terrorized the people." Ziring (1994, 98) described it as "Unrestrained by law or law enforcement … (Rakkhi Bahini) roamed the countryside, looting the poor villagers and committing bodily harm on those resisting their demands."

The exact magnitude of the killings and tortures committed by the Bahini will never be known. The JSD, which succeeded in mounting formidable opposition to the Awami League in the immediate aftermath of the war, put the number of killings and arrests of its supporters at 60,000 and 80,000, respectively, during the first two years of the regime (*Bangladesh Observer* July 19, 1973).[16] The Amnesty International (1974) also accused the Bahini for detaining the editors of *Nayajug* and *Ganakantha*, as well as thousands of JSD supporter and leaders, including Abdur Rab and M. A. Jalil. One of the senior officers of the Bahini, in a recent recount of the alleged atrocities of the Bahini (Alam, 2014), claims that

although the Bahini could not be absolved of any wrong doing, history has treated the Bahini harshly by attributing many of the excesses of that took place during the Mujib regime, especially in respect to the treatment of the opposition and radical left. As the controversy over the role of the Rakkhi Bahini still rages on, the issue will be discussed in greater details in the last chapter.

Marginalization of Regular Army

Top leaders of the Awami League, including Mujib himself, despised a strong military. Immediately after the war, Tajuddin sought to establish a national militia to replace regular army. Mujib, who suffered in the hands of Pakistani military, openly stated, "I do not want to create another monster like the one we had in Pakistan," wishing "the army to wither on the vine" (Mascarenhas 1986, 36). Then, like other freedom fighters, the armed forces also had high aspirations to rebuild the newly independent country. Some of them enraged the regime by criticizing the Indian army for its alleged looting of the Pakistan army's military hardware, capital goods, and industrial raw materials, estimated to be around $500 million to $1 billion. Such criticisms led to the arrest of Abdul Jalil—a retired major and a sector commander of the liberation war, who later headed the JSD (Jahan 1987, 73).[17]

Then, many in the army saw the establishment of Rakkhi Bahini under the watchful eyes of Indian military advisers as a threat to their survival (Ahmed 1991, 63). At the same time, Mujib himself was also aware of growing disenchantment of the regular army with his government (Khan 1976, 123–124). On top of that, in March, 1972, Mujib signed a 25-year Treaty of Friendship with India—a defense cooperation agreement, significantly marginalizing the role of the regular armed forces of the country. Subsequently, the armed forces also witnessed dwindling budgetary allocations to them—their share in the national budgets fell from 16 percent in 1972–73 to less than 13 percent in 1974–75, resulting in an ill-fed and badly uniformed army that was denied of modern arms and equipment (Mascarenhas 1996, 26).

These developments sent unmistakable signal to the country's armed forces that Mujib was disinclined to develop a strong national defense. At the same time, the armed forces themselves were further weakened by internal rifts between the officers who fought for the liberation war and those who repatriated from Pakistan as a result of tripartite agreement among Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The "returnees" were assimilated in 1974 only reluctantly and after screening, but they remained divided (Baxter 1982, 75). As both factions had almost identical strength—the number of freedom fighters stood around 40,000, while the number of returnees stood around 35,000—the internal rift took far-reaching tolls on the army.

V. FRAMING OF CONSTITUTION AND HOLDING OF GENERAL

ELECTION

Framing of a New Constitution

On March 23, 1972, within just three months of the nation's liberation, Mujib promulgated the Bangladesh Constituent Assembly Order (Presidential Order No. 22) to draft a new constitution. All but two members of the national and provincial assemblies of East Pakistan, elected in the general election of 1970–71, were designated as members of the Constituent Assembly.[18] In its first session, held on April 10, 1972, a 34-member Constitution Draft Committee was formed under the leadership of law minister Kamal Hossain.[19] In its second and last session, held on October 12, 1972, the committee submitted its 91-page draft constitution, following 300 hours of deliberations in 74 sessions. The Constituent Assembly deliberated on the draft constitution for about three weeks before unanimously adopting it on November 4, 1972. The constitution faced little criticism within the parliament as there were not many opposition members. All three non-Awami League members of the assembly, however, abstained from voting for the constitution. The constitution, however, was fiercely criticized outside the parliament, especially by various political parties.[20] The new constitution came into force on December 16, 1972, coinciding the first Victory Day anniversary of the nation.

The new constitution stipulated a unitary government, a unicameral legislature, and a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. The country's president, a titular head of state, was designated to be the supreme commander of the defense forces. The president was made an integral part of the legislative process as well —he was empowered to summon the legislature, prorogue its sessions, or even dissolve it with the advice of the prime minister. In the tradition of Westminster-style democracy, the prime minister was bestowed with the executive authority of the government. The constitution, however, entrusted the parliament, neither the president nor the prime minister, with the power to declare war.

The constitution adopted four diverse fundamental principles for the new state —nationalism, socialism, democracy, and secularism. The principle of nationalism was couched in the context of language and culture as well as the spirit of the struggle for liberation war. The country's citizenship was described as *Bangalee*s, and the Bengali language was adopted as the only official language of the country. The principle of socialism promised establishment of a socialist economic system to attain an exploitation-free, just, and egalitarian society. The principle of democracy guaranteed fundamental human rights, universal adult franchise, election of representatives at all levels of

administration, and did not contain any emergency provisions for suspension of fundamental rights or preventive detention. The principle of secularism banned the use and abuse of religion for political purposes and prohibited religious discrimination.

The constitution also provided for separation of the judiciary from the executive branch. The chief justice and other judges of the highest courts of the country—the high court and the supreme court—were to be appointed by the president as advised by the prime minister, and they could be removed only by a parliamentary resolution supported by a two-third majority. The highest judiciary was placed under the administrative purview of the chief justice. The high court was entrusted with the power to supervise all subordinate courts and tribunals, and granted extraordinary original jurisdiction in enforcement of fundamental rights. The constitution reserved 15 parliamentary seats for women to be elected by the members of parliament, and banned floor crossing—voting against the party would result in vacating the parliamentary seat.

Major Drawbacks of the Constitution

Apparently the Mujib regime sought to frame a constitution before any formidable opposition could emerge, but the members of the Constituent Assembly actually lacked legal mandate to frame a constitution as they were originally elected to frame a constitution for Pakistan. Instead, they rebelled against Pakistan and framed a constitution for Bangladesh that resulted from the success of the rebellion. Then, the legal authority of the Constituent Assembly was derived from a presidential decree issued by Mujib, who assumed the presidency as a result of a proclamation by the Bangladesh government-in-exile, which itself was an extralegal entity. Moreover, the constitution making was effectively a one-party exercise from the beginning to the end. The Constituent Assembly obviously could have greater legitimacy and legal standing had it been elected afresh specifically for the purpose of framing a new constitution after the liberation of the country.

Second, the constitution adopted the language-based *Bangalee* nationalism without providing intellectual clarity to distinguish the people of Bangladesh from the Bengali-speaking people in other places, such as in the Indian states of West Bengal and Bihar.[21] Also, the concept of *Bangalee* nationalism failed to acknowledge that many ethnic groups of the country, especially those in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, had their own dialects and cultures, and they did not speak Bengali. The constitution says it is also based on the culture—but provides no clarity whether it was the long tradition and culture of East Bengal Muslims, or the short-lived culture of the people of the geographic territory as demarcated by Radcliff Commission in 1947. Then the constitution described the citizenship of the country as *Bangalee*s. As elaborated in the last chapter, absurdity of the concept has led to such fierce controversies over the years that the political discourse of the country remains divided almost in the middle.

The principle of socialism also sounded hollow as the Awami League historically had no commitment to socialism—it came to embrace socialism for the first time in 1969 by endorsing the 11-point program of the Student Action Committee in order to broaden its support base among radical students and militant youth. Later, in the 1970 election manifesto, the party did incorporate some socialist demands, but it essentially remained a party of the petty bourgeoisie and the upper middle class. The principle of secularism was also broadly viewed as a surreptitious attempt by the regime to appease the Hindu minority of the country and neighboring India. Such apprehension gained further

grounds when the regime banned all religion-based parties.[22]

The Mujib regime also could not live long with the original constitution. In September, 1973, less than a year after the adoption of the original constitution, the regime amended the constitution incorporating provisions for declaring emergency and preventive detention. The amendment empowered the president to declare a state of emergency in case of “a grave emergency,” if “economic or political life of Bangladesh” was threatened by “war or external aggression or internal disturbance” (Umar, 1972). Then the Special Powers Act, 1974, which followed, provided for preventive detention, trial by special tribunals, and death sentence or life imprisonment for black marketers, smugglers, and hoarders, who posed serious challenges to the regime since the country’s independence. The government could detain or arrest anybody without warrant and deny bails to anyone accused or convicted. Ironically, the law could not be enforced properly as the ruling party leaders and activists were found to be involved en masse in activities that the law was intended to deter (Ahmed 1991, 183).[23]

Holding of General Election

The Mujib regime held the first parliamentary elections after the independence of the country on March 7, 1973. The regime sought to earn legitimacy through elections especially because the Constituent Assembly was appointed by a presidential decree, the constitution was framed by the Awami League alone, and during the entire period since the independence, the country was ran by presidential decrees and ordinances. Both Mujib and the Awami League were, however, still very popular, and the opposition was very weak and disorganized. The most conspicuous opposition came from the JSD, a breakaway faction of the Awami League. Other notable opposition parties included pro-Chinese and pro-Moscow factions of the National Awami Party (NAP) led by Moulana Bhashani and Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, respectively, and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) led by Moni Singh. The NAP and the CPB were, however, close allies of the Awami League.

The Awami League took the election as a referendum on the fundamental principles of the new constitution, bundled together as *Mujibbad* (Mujibism).[24] The Awami League's main argument was that the people had already fought and won a revolutionary war, it did not need another revolution to make a transition to socialism, which could be attained gradually by elected representatives. The main opposition JSD, on the other hand, branded its platform as "scientific socialism," calling for a socialist revolution in line with Marxist preaching. In its election campaigns, the party, however, concentrated more on pervasive lawlessness and corruption in the country.[25]

The election campaigns also revealed something very interesting—all contesting parties branded each other as foreign agents. The Awami League, NAP (Muzaffar), and CPB branded the opposition parties, mainly the JSD and the NAP (Bhashani), as agents of "US-Chinese imperialists," who conspired to undermine the sovereignty and integrity of country. The JSD and the NAP (Bhashani), in turn, branded the Awami League, the NAP (Muzaffar), and the CPB as agents of "Soviet-Indian imperialism" (Jahan 1974, 127).

The election was contested by 14 political parties and 1,075 candidates who vied for 300 parliamentary seats. Voter turnout was reported to be 56 percent: of which 73.2 percent went to the ruling Awami League, 8.6 percent went to the NAP (Muzaffar), 5.4 percent went to the NAP (Bhashani), and 6.5 percent went to the JSD. Although 3 in 10 voters opposed the ruling party, it won a landslide by bagging 292 of 300 seats. The opposition candidates who mastered almost 30

percent of the votes cast in the election won only eight seats (see Table 4.1). “In the end, it was not even a contest. For all the 16 parties and 1056 candidates contesting the first election in the year-old state Bangladesh on Wednesday, only one man and one party mattered” (*Economist*, March 10, 1973).

The JSD contested nationwide and received 6.5 percent of total votes cast, but won only one seat. Neither NAP (Bhashani) nor NAP (Muzaffar) won any seat, although together they received 14 percent of the total votes cast in the election. Only one major opposition leader won the election—Ataur Rahman Khan of the Jatiyo League. In several constituencies, especially in the districts of Barisal, Tangail, and Chittagong, ballot counting was mysteriously halted midway and at the end ruling party candidates were declared winners. Defeats of many top opposition leaders, such as Major Jalil of JSD, Rashed Khan Menon, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, and Aleem Al-Razee of NAP (Bashani), and Suranjit Sen Gupta of NAP (Muzaffar) were widely attributed to maneuvering of poll results (Maniruzzaman 1988, 156–57).

Both domestic and international press attributed the ruling party’s landslide to massive rigging, stuffing of ballot boxes, and such other unfair means. Baxter (1997, 91), for example, remarked, “The election was blatantly and unnecessarily rigged by the Awami League, with the support of many officials who were overseeing the election.” Similarly, Franda (1982a, 157) wrote, “Both the police and members of the Awami League were prominent in their presence in the polling booths” in spite of the fact that the party would have been able to “capture a comfortable majority of seats and between 50–60 percent of the votes even in a totally fair election.” Apparently, Mujib allowed his party apparatchiks and government officials to resort to massive vote rigging under an “electoral strategy of overkilling the opposition” in order to virtually wipeout the opposition parties from the parliament (Jahan 1974, 129). Some observers believed that Mujib might have allowed massive rigging with an ulterior motive to pave the way toward one-party rule some day (Khatib, 1981).

Table 4.1 Results of Bangladesh General Election in 1973

	Number of Seats Contested	Number of Seats Won	Percentage of Votes secured
Awami League	300	292	73.17
National Awami Party (Muzzaffar)	223	—	8.59
National Awami Party (Bhashani)	169	—	5.42
Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD)	236	1	6.48
Independents and others	150	6	6.34
Total	1078	299*	100%

Notes: *Election in one constituency was postponed due to the death of a candidate. Later the seat was won by an Awami League candidate.
Source: Compiled by author from various sources.

VI. FOREIGN RELATIONS OF THE REGIME

The Mujib regime confronted several daunting tasks in respect to foreign relations. First, it had to bring back millions of refugees who took shelter in India during the liberation war. Second, it had to send the victorious Indian troops back home and deal with the Pakistani POWs. Third, it had to secure recognition from international community and establish formal relations with multilateral bodies in order to obtain badly needed foreign aid for reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy. The first issue is discussed in the next chapter in the context of the regime's relief and rehabilitation efforts. The other issues are discussed below.

Sending Indian Troops Back Home

Perhaps one of the most lasting contributions of Mujib when it comes to international affairs was that he succeeded in persuading the Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi to withdraw all her troops from Bangladeshi soil within just three months of the country's liberation. The Indian army not only trained the Mukti Bahini or took an active part in liberating Bangladesh, it also set the wheels of administration to restore law and order in postliberation Bangladesh. But Mujib asked such a victorious foreign force to return home immediately. During his visit to Calcutta on February 5–8, 1972, Mujib reached an agreement with Gandhi to withdraw Indian forces from Bangladesh by March 25, 1972, but all Indian troops returned back home by March 12, 1972—thirteen days ahead of the deadline. Mujib, however, gave a hearty send-off to the Indian troops at the Shurawardy Uddayan, "You have sided with us in our peril. You trained our boys, gave them arms and joined in our struggle. I have no language to express my gratitude" (Ayoob 1975, 79).

Shortly after the departure of the Indian forces, Mujib, however, signed a 25-year Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Peace with India during Indira Gandhi's Dhaka visit on March 19, 1972. Modeled after the India-Russia Friendship Treaty signed in 1971, the treaty provided that both countries use "all possible avenues of mutual cooperation" to safeguard stability and security of their countries, not "enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party," and refrain from "any aggression against the other party." The treaty also stipulated that in case one party was attacked or threatened, both parties "will enter into mutual consultations in order to take appropriate effective measures to eliminate the threat" (Singh et al., 1999, 123; Sen et al., 1999, I: 123). To many in Bangladesh, the treaty, however, came as a manifestation of Indian hegemony over the country—as an attempt to keep Bangladesh dependent on the Indian military for its national security and to ensure that Bangladesh never provide safe heavens to secessionist elements of the northeastern Indian states (Wright 1988, 125; Khan, 1973).

Dealing with the Pakistani Prisoners of War

Conspicuous absence of the Mujibnagar government and General Osmani in the surrender ceremony of 93,000 Pakistani soldiers at the Suhrawardy Uddayan on December 16, 1971, will most certainly go down as a watershed event in the history of Bangladesh. But what was still more striking was that immediately

after the surrender, General Niazi and his troops were all taken to India. Thus, both Indian and Pakistani forces apparently viewed this historic episode as surrender of the Pakistani forces to the Indian forces, not to the Mukti Bahini. On the other hand, Mujib and top ruling party leaders publicly committed themselves to hold trials of Pakistani POWs for committing genocide and other atrocities in the country.

Even before Mujib's return from Pakistan, the Tajuddin government decided on December 31, 1972, to appoint an inquiry committee to probe into the acts of genocide committed by the Pakistani forces on the soil of Bangladesh. Then on January 29, 1972, the Mujib regime set up two separate tribunals—one for the trial of persons accused of genocide, and another for the trial of other war criminals.[26] Then on March 17, 1972, in the presence of Indira Gandhi, Mujib declared at the Suhrawardy Uddayan that India would hand over the POWs to Bangladesh for their trial on its soils. Indira Gandhi also lent her unreserved support to the trial of the POWs in Bangladesh. The joint communiqué, issued at the end of Gandhi's Dhaka visit also guaranteed that India would "fully cooperate with the government of Bangladesh in bringing those guilty persons to justice who are responsible for the worst genocide in recent times" (*News Review on South Asia*, March, 1972).

Ultimately, however, the Mujib regime failed to live up to its commitments. On April 17, 1973, Mujib declared that Bangladesh would pursue trial of only 195 POWs against whom clear evidence of serious war crimes was established. Accordingly, in July, 1973, the constitution was amended to empower the government to detain and prosecute POWs for crimes against humanity and set up an International Crimes Tribunal for their trial. Ultimately, however, the regime abandoned its bid to prosecute POWs altogether in April, 1974, at the tripartite summit of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Pakistani president, appealed to Bangladesh to "forgive and forget the mistakes of the past."

Exactly what led the Mujib regime to renege on the solemn promise it had made to the people in numerous public meetings throughout 1972 and 1973 might never be known. Relevant literature, however, suggests that the regime came to realize that it was logistically impossible to bring thousands of POWs to a trial as the country lacked the requisite legal and financial infrastructure to undertake such a gigantic task. Second, when the dust began to settle, the regime also realized that the matter of putting the POWs on trial involved three sovereign parties—India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh—none of these countries

could make a decision unilaterally. Third, the POWs were neither on the soil of Bangladesh nor under its custody, and as they were already removed to India, Bangladesh could bring them back for a trial only with the approval of India.

Fourth, bilateral relations between India and Pakistan also began to cool down under the leaderships of Pakistan's new president Bhutto. At the summit in the Indian resort city of Simla in July, 1972, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistani president Bhutto decided to normalize relationships between the two countries. They agreed to "put an end to the conflict and confrontation" and work for the "promotion of a friendly and harmonious relationship and the establishment of durable peace" between India and Pakistan, and stipulated that the "basic issues and causes of conflict which have bedeviled the relations between the two countries for the last twenty-five years shall be resolved by peaceful means" (Ayoob 1975, 151–153).

The Simla Agreement also bound the countries to respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. Although the agreement did not lead to the release of Pakistani POWs, it emboldened Pakistan's position not to negotiate the issue with Bangladesh (Ziring 1976, 331). At the same time, the Mujib regime also found itself in an increasingly insecure position as many countries such as the United States, China, and many Muslim nations, including the Saudi Arabia, withheld recognition to Bangladesh adversely affecting the country's economic reconstruction efforts. Pakistan also withheld its recognition to Bangladesh without the unconditional release of all POWs, when India showed its unwillingness to carry on the burden of feeding and maintaining a huge number of POWs for a prolonged period.

Securing International Recognitions

Obtaining recognition from other nations and securing membership in key multilateral bodies had been another daunting task for the Mujib regime. The nation achieved independence through a bloody struggle, when neighboring India, along with the former Soviet Union had been key allies, whereas the United States and China sided with Pakistan. Even just a few days before the imminent surrender of the Pakistani forces, the United States sent its Seventh Fleet to the Indian Ocean apparently to salvage the integrity of Pakistan. As India was instrumental for the freedom of the country, recognition from the Soviet bloc and nonaligned countries immediately followed that of India on December 6, 1971. By June, 1973, Bangladesh was able to secure recognition from 99 countries, including the United States, but Pakistan as well as two other major countries—China, which had veto power in the United Nations, and the Saudi Arabia, a key Muslim country—still refused to extend recognition to Bangladesh.

Pakistan refused to recognize Bangladesh as the Mujib regime still remained committed to put 1,500 Pakistani POWs on trial. Bhutto also threatened retaliation against any attempt to put POWs on trial as he had an estimated 200,000 *Bangalee*s, including 30,000 soldiers and 17,000 civil servants, stranded in Pakistan (Burke 1973, 1038; Simon 1973, 654). On the other hand, Pakistan's recognition became a matter of paramount importance for Bangladesh as China, a close ally of Pakistan, remained committed to veto any vote at the UN Security Council in favor of recognizing Bangladesh. Even though Bangladesh had already obtained membership of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN membership was equally important for the country as it needed global support for rehabilitation of refugees and reconstruction of its war-ravaged economy. Eventually, Pakistan extended recognition to Bangladesh on February 22, 1974, and with China ceasing to exercise its veto power, Bangladesh became the 133rd member of the United Nations on September 9, 1974.

Pakistan's recognition to Bangladesh was, however, facilitated by two far-reaching developments. First, Bangladesh abandoned its bid to hold trail of Pakistani POWs against whom it had framed charges of genocide and other crimes. Formal announcement in this regard came in April, 1974, at the tripartite summit of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan at Simla. Second, being prompted by Saudi Arabia, Mujib joined the Islamic Summit Conference held in Pakistan in

February 1973. By joining the summit, which was attended by 37 Muslim countries, Mujib sent a clear signal of standing with the Muslim countries in defiance of secular India and the communist Soviet bloc. Reportedly, Mujib's effigy was burned in the streets of Calcutta in protest of his participation in the summit. At the same time, this move helped Bangladesh in securing recognition among key Muslim countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Turkey, on top of securing membership of the United Nations.

NOTES

1. While in prison, Mujib was charged with treason for waging a war against Pakistan. A special military tribunal completed his trial without reaching a verdict on December 18, 1971—two days after Pakistani forces surrendered in East Pakistan. Pakistani authorities released him mainly in response to appeals made by numerous world leaders, including those of the United States and the former Soviet Union.

2. While in New Delhi, in his speech at the Parade Ground, Mujib expressed gratitude to India for its historic role in the liberation war of Bangladesh. He spoke in Bengali—most of the audience "could not understand the words he spoke, but they responded to his speech as if they were listening to music" (Khatib 1981, 104).

3. The gathering was "in size massive, in color spectacular, in sound tumultuous and in mood fiercely loyal" (*Statesmen*, Jan. 11, 1972).

4. The speech was published in numerous local newspapers. For western publications, see the *New York Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Statesmen* of January 11, 1972.

5. Both factions of the NAP—the pro-Moscow faction of Muzaffar and the pro-Beijing faction led by Bhashani, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), and the student fronts of these parties called for such a national government. Ziring (1994, 82) argues that had Mujib not returned to Bangladesh soon after the liberation war, Tajuddin could hardly resisted such a move.

6. During the nine months of the liberation war, Mujib was so isolated that on his return from prison he asked his advisers to explain the meaning of the term Razakar. Also, when he was taken to Pakistani prison, he could have never anticipated that on his return foreign affairs and defense policy would be among his key responsibilities (Klatt 1972, 113).

7. As explained in the previous chapter, the actual number of freedom fighters would never be known with any certainty. For estimated number of Mukti Bahini and the fiasco of certificates, also see Ahmed (1991, 14–33), Mascarenhas (1986, 11–26), and Ali (1994, 37–38).

8. The Mujib regime acknowledged in the parliament that there were 17,341 cases of hijacking and 10,280 cases of robbery in the first year of independence. See Ahmed (1991, 96–106), *Ittefaq* (July 7, 1973), and *Ganakantha* (Jan. 29, 1973 and February 2, 1974).

9. The term Bihari refers to Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from the Indian states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Gujarat, who migrated to former East Pakistan after the partition of British India. In 1973, Pakistan agreed to accept 80,000 of approximately 300,000 Biharis who lived in Bangladesh. See Khan (1976, 106–108) about the role they played in Pakistani politics.

10. For example, the editor of *Weekly Holiday*, Enayetullah Khan, wrote in the February 6, 1972, issue: "Just as one does not become a collaborator by merely attending the office or performing for the radio or the TV under duress over the nine black months, one cannot also squash one's guilt of the past 24 years by merely crossing the border."

11. Mascarenhas (1986, 25) quotes an interesting story about a trial from M. R. Akhter Mukul's *Mujibur*

Rakta Lal:

The man in the dock, who had been accused of being a Razakar, stood silent when the magistrate repeatedly asked him "Are you guilty or not guilty?" In exasperation some lawyers in the court shouted at him, "Why don't you plead?" The man finally answered: "Sir, I'm thinking what to say." Magistrate: "What are you thinking?" Accused: (pointing to the magistrate), "I am thinking that the person who occupies that chair is the one who recruited me as a Razakar. Now he has become a magistrate. It's a cruel twist of fate that I am in the dock and he is conducting my trial."

12. See *Ekattarar Ghatakara Ke Kothai* (The Whereabouts of the 1971 Collaborators), a 1987 publication of the Muktijuddhar Chhetana Bikash Kendra (Center for Encouraging Awareness of the Liberation War), pp. 20–21.

13. Earlier on November 29, 1973, the regime announced release of nearly 33,000 collaborators, who were not accused of specific criminal charges (*Bangladesh Observer*, November 30, 1973).

14. S. M. Ali (1994, 99), a veteran journalist, captured the sense of resentment toward bureaucracy in following words: "Even Mujibur Rahman becomes livid with anger when he denounces bureaucracy and warns civil servants that they will go to hell if they do not change their ways. Moulana Bhashani cannot complete a speech unless he has made one biting attack on the civil service. When a newspaper runs out of topics for editorial comment, it turns to the civil service."

15. One of these officers was Safiul Azam, who later served as a cabinet secretary and a minister in the Ziaur Rahman regime.

16. In May 2002, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government, maintained that some 30,000 political workers and leaders who opposed the Awami League were killed by the Rakkhi Bahini during 1972–1975 (*Daily Star*, May 10, 2002).

17. Khan (1976, 116), however, maintains that at the India-Bangladesh summit, held on May 15, 1974, in New Delhi, Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi pledged to Mujib to return all military hardware taken out of Bangladesh by the Indian army after the surrender of Pakistani forces.

18. The excluded members were Nurul Amin and Manabendra Narayan Larma—both were earlier declared collaborators for taking side with Pakistan during the war. The Constituent Assembly had only three non-Awami League members—one from an opposition party and the other two were independents.

19. The draft committee had only one non-Awami League member named Suranjit Sen Gupta, who belonged to the Ganatantrik Party.

20. Several political parties, however, raised criticisms of the constitution outside the parliament. See Huq (1973) and Jahan (1973).

21. Not only the language, but also the culture of the people of East and West Bengal is so intertwined that an Indian scholar (Chopra 1971, 372) asserts, "East Bengal shares everything but its dominant religion with West Bengal, and even religion does not divide it from West Bengal as much as other things divide it from West Pakistan." On the other hand, pointing to such a strong cultural affinity between the *Bangalee*s of East and West Bengal, some Western Muslim leaders testified before the US Congress in 1971 claiming "One cannot be a Bengali and be a Muslim" (cited in LaPorte Jr. 1972, 103).

22. It is notable that one reason for Indian recognition to the provisional government of Bangladesh on December 6, 1971, was its commitment to secularism. On the occasion of extending the recognition, Indira Gandhi informed the Indian parliament that Bangladesh "proclaimed their basic principles of State policy to be democracy, socialism, secularism … no discrimination on basis of race, religion, sex or creed … ideals to which India also is dedicated" (ASIL 1972, 122). Also, Mujib, during his stopover in New Delhi on his way to Bangladesh on January 8, 1971, affirmed his commitment to the principles of democracy, socialism, and secularism (Hasan 1983, 66).

23. The Special Powers Act, 1974, also empowered the government to jail or fine anybody for printing, publishing, or distributing prejudicial reports, and compel authors to release sources of such reports. For greater details see Ahmed (1991) and Jahan (1974).

24. The so-called Mujibbad actually orbited around "Sheikhdom—Mujib at the top already, Moni on the prowl, and Kamal to come later, the father, the nephew and the son," remarked a reporter in the *Economic*

and Political Weekly, in its March 24, 1973, issue. The Mujibbad also came as an attempt to build a personality cult around Mujib and was “looked upon by many as a fascist trend” (Jahan 1972, 206).

25. One of the key figures of the regime, Gazi Golam Mostafa—the much aligned chief of the Bangladesh Red Cross, who headed the relief and rehabilitation operation, received great prominence in the media for widespread corruption. But the roots of corruption lied with the regime itself. As Kochaneck (1993, 216) remarks, “The Awami League that took power in 1972 was composed of a middle class, rural-based elite that was steeped in the culture of patron-client politics. They were largely district and mofussil (town) lawyers, mukhtars (legal assistants), and teachers who were engaged in petty trade and business in an effort to supplement their meagre government incomes.”

26. Mujib also appointed two prosecutors—S. R. Pal, a Supreme Court lawyer and Serajul Haque, a Supreme Court lawyer and a member of Constituent Assembly—for the trial of the POWs.

Chapter 5

Mujib Regime

Major Economic Measures

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mujib regime inherited a war-ravaged economy with visible marks of extensive destruction and devastation everywhere. During the liberation war, about ten million people took refuge in India, many millions lost homes and belongings; hundreds of thousands of young men joined the liberation forces, and most of the workers and farmers deserted their factories and farming land bringing the entire industrial and agricultural production of the country to a grinding halt. Then the nine-month long guerrilla warfare, which relied on a strategy of crippling the military capabilities of the Pakistani forces by destroying the transport and communications networks, led to a complete collapse of the country's transport and communications sectors. Thousands of bridges and culverts needed reconstruction and hundreds of miles of roads and railway tracks needed immediate repair to jumpstart the economy.

On top of that, the country confronted famine situations persistently requiring large-scale international humanitarian assistance on an emergency basis. Standing crops suffered terrible damage as dreadful floods submerged the country year after year, runaway inflation ate the vitals of the economy, and manmade catastrophes—such as massive corruption, hoarding, smuggling, black-marketeering—severely crippled nation building and reconstruction capability from within. Thus, the Mujib regime had a herculean job of putting the economy back on track, rehabilitating millions of refugees, arranging food

for the starving masses, and reconstructing economic infrastructure, and unfortunately for the regime, it had to address all these simultaneously.

This chapter explains the economic measures that the Mujib regime undertook to jumpstart the economy. Section 2 explains the measures undertaken by the regime to restore the country's transport and communication systems. Section 3 sheds light on the relief and rehabilitation measures. Section 4 explains how the regime handled persistent food crises, and famine or near-famine situations. Section 5 examines the nationalization of industries and commerce and section 6 explains the economic planning processes and farming of the First Five-Year Plan.

II. RESTORATION OF TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION SYSTEM

The entire transportation and communication network of the country—no matter roads, railways, waterways, or the airlines—needed to be rebuilt on an emergency basis. More than 300 railway bridges, including crucial ones—such as the Hardinge Bridge on the river Padma and the Bhairab Bridge on the river Meghna—and over 270 road bridges and culverts were damaged during the war severing communication links throughout the country. The country's inland water traffic also suffered massive dislocations as numerous inland and ocean vessels as well as ferries that provided road links were destroyed or disconnected. The country's telephone and telegraph links were so badly impaired that the government as well as international relief organizations had to depend on tracing services and short-wave radios for communication. The regime estimated the damage to the transport and communication sector at $900 million, while a UN fact-finding mission put the damage at $200 million (Sailer, 1972; World Bank, 1972a).

Waterways[1]

Before liberation, much of the riverine country's passenger and cargo transport took place on the waterways, while the railways and roadways played a lesser important role. A vast network of inland water transports, whose total arterial route mileage ranged between 3,000 and 5,000 (depending on monsoon or non-monsoon seasons) served an estimated 30,000 privately owned nonmotorized vehicles (country boats), as well as a small number of mechanized fleets (launches) owned by both private operators and the government. During the war,

about one-third of the country's boats, and passenger and cargo carriers were damaged, and over 180 crafts with a cargo-carrying capacity of 25,000 tons sunk.

In 1972, the country had two seaports in Chittagong and Chhalna capable of handling ocean-going vessels. The Chittagong seaport, inherited from the British as a small railway port that served the local needs of East Bengal, went through massive expansion during the Pakistan period to fill the void created by the loss of the Calcutta port to India in 1947. By the 1960s, Chittagong port emerged as an international seaport with an annual capacity of 4.5 million tons, capable of handling over 75 percent of the country's trade. During the war, the port suffered massive damage—of the 15 wrecks in its harbor, only 3 were afloat; of the 14 berths, 8 were usable; and of the 3 river moorings, 2 were usable. The port also lost much of its transit sheds, grab dredgers and other cargo-handling equipment. The Chalna port—a lighter-age port—which handled exports of jute and jute products from northern districts of the country, lost almost half of its operational capacity during the war.

Roads and Highways

Prior to liberation, in 1970, Bangladesh had approximately 20,000 miles of road networks, of which 2,398 miles were paved, 5,000 miles were laid with brick, and 12,000 miles were muddy roads. The country had about 70,000 motorized vehicles, 40 percent of which were motorcycles and auto rickshaws, about 15 percent were trucks and 10 percent buses. Numerous rivers and water channels made major roads and highways dependent on ferries, most of which were operated by private sector with lease from the government. The war damaged approximately 275 road bridges, totaling over 16,000 feet. Also, most of the buses and trucks were damaged either partially or entirely.

Railways

In 1970, Bangladesh had 1,775 miles of railway routes with 349 steam and 143 diesel locomotives. The railway system consisted of a broad-gauge system on the west side of Jamuna river that connected the northern and southern parts of the country from Khulna to Rangpur, and a medium-gauge system to the east of Jamuna river that connected the eastern and south eastern parts of the country, from Chittagong to Sylhet. Two ferry crossings over the river Jamuna provided for trans-shipment of railway wagons between the two parts of the country. The railway carried about 73,000 passengers, covered about 2 million passenger

1.

miles and transported about 5,000 tons of cargo annually. The war caused extensive damage to the railway system—a total of 295 railway bridges, including the Hardinge Bridge over the Padma, King George Bridge over the Meghna, and two bridges over the Brahmaputra and the Teesta rivers—were damaged. On top of that more than 50 miles of railway tracks were uprooted, five diesel electric locomotives were damaged, and all four passenger ferries were sunk.

Airways

During the war, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) provided both domestic and international air service to Bangladesh. The PIA primarily used F-27s to operate domestic flights from Dhaka to several points within Bangladesh. All airports and airfields of the country were bombed and damaged during the war. As the country had no planes for international flights, in the immediate aftermath of the war, all international services were conducted via Calcutta, which also functioned as the communications center for Bangladesh's international relief operation.

Reconstruction of the Transport Sector

To jumpstart the economy, especially to facilitate speedy delivery of food and relief commodities throughout the country, the Mujib regime undertook a massive reconstruction effort on an emergency basis. Immediate help came from the Indian army—during their short stay in Bangladesh, they temporarily reconstructed numerous roads, bridges, and culverts to restore some semblance of a transport and communication network. In March, 1972, when Indian army departed, up to 75 percent of the roads and railway system was operational and the Dhaka airport was made ready for landing of heavy transport planes (see Table 5.1). At the same time, the Chittagong port was made ready for ocean-going crafts as the Russian naval forces cleared mines from approximately 400 square miles. Then major assistance came from the United Nations, which provided over 1,500 trucks, several helicopters, mini-bulkers, and flat-bottom vessels, and made the Chalna port operational by mid-1972.

Table 5.1 Indian Army Assistance to Bangladesh Transports and Communication Sector in 1972

Temporary repair of 90 bridges, big and small.

1.

Repair of sufficient bridges, culverts, *etc.* to put back into commission 75 percent of the railways.

2.

Replacement of high-level bridges costing Rs. 4.2 million, using 70 bailey bridges (these came as an outright gift to Bangladesh government).

3.

Thirty-six bridges using Indian army equipment, 34 using Pakistani army equipment.

4.

Nine ferries capable of carrying the heaviest commercial loads.

5.

Railway repairs, maintenance, operation of railway services (until March 10, 1972), river boat services, especially the ferry service near Hardinge Bridge.

6.

Repair of airfields, especially Dhaka airport, heavily damaged during the war. It was made fit for landing of heavy transports.

7.

Clearing of mines and unexploded bombs from the villages—a total of 56 bombs and 50,000 mines were defused.

8.

Naval clearance of mine fields and wrecks, restoration of wharves and jetties. Chittagong port was made operable for ocean-going craft by January 11.

9.

Source: Wright (1988, 159).

In the first two budgets (1972–73 and 1973–74), the Mujib regime allocated over 30 percent of its total developmental outlays to transports and communication sector, and including development expenditures on agriculture and rural development, over 50 percent of its reconstruction outlays went to restore the country's transports and communication sector on a priority basis (see Table 5.2). Over 60 percent of the government's budgetary allocation for transports and communication, however, went to two of the biggest highways of

the country—the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and the Dhaka-Aricha highway—funded largely by the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), respectively. The budget also granted priority to restore railway traffic by repairing the Hardinge Bridge that linked the western half of the country with the Chalna port, and the Bairab Bridge that connected the central part of the country with Chittagong and the eastern part of the country. With both bridges repaired, the entire railway system of the country became operational by mid-1973 (World Bank, 1972b).

Turning to the waterways, the regime nationalized the mechanized part of the inland water transport system of the country. The Pakistan River Steamers, the main private sector inland water transport company, and other smaller private companies, as well as ferry services at several key points—such as Aricha, Daudkandi, and Naraynogonj—were brought under a newly established state-owned agency called the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC). The regime also established the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) for charting the river navigation routes and managing inland water ports, and launched the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) for managing ocean-going vessels with a ship obtained from India. As for the aviation sector, besides repairing all damaged airfields and airports, the regime established the Bangladesh Biman International (Biman) by procuring medium-range Boeing 727 and long-range Boeing 707 jets. It also took measures to complete the international airport at Kurmitola—about ten kilometers from Dhaka—in order to launch regional and intercontinental services (Dowlah 2009, 203–209).

Table 5.2 Development Expenditures during Mujib Regime, 1972–75 (in million taka unless otherwise indicated. Numbers in parenthesis are percentages)

	1972–73		*1973–74*	
	Budget	*Revised Budget*	*Budget*	*Revised Budget*
Development expenditures:	5,010	3,978	5,203	4,000
Agriculture, rural development, and water	1,792 (35.8)	1,350 (33.9)	1,600 (30.5)	1,362 (34)
Transport and communication sector	1,431 (28.5)	1,157 (29.1)	1,678 (31.9)	1,408 (35.2)

Source: Author's compilation on the basis of Tables 5.1 and VI.2 of World Bank (1975).

III. RELIEF AND REHABILITATION MEASURES

Rehabilitation of about 10 million refugees, who returned from India, as well as several millions who lost their homes and belongings due to the liberation war, came as another formidable challenge for the regime. Most of the refugees returned home by mid-March, 1972, coinciding with the departure of Indian forces from Bangladesh. Although the Sailer Report (1972) and the World Bank (1972a) estimated the cost of rehabilitation at $1 billion and $2 billion, respectively, the regime put the cost at $3 billion. The regime also made an international call for immediate assistance in the form of 200,000–250,000 tons of food grains per month, 100,000 tons of cement, 50,000 tons of corrugated iron sheets, 50,000 tons of timber, and 100,000 tons of other commodities, including medicines and industrial supplies (Franda 1982a, 8).

India, with its military forces still on the soil of Bangladesh, came first to assist in the reconstruction efforts. In March, 1972, India supplied 20,000 tons of coal, 40,000 tons of urea, 100,000 tons of crude oil, 100,000 tons of refined petroleum products, 50,000 tons of cement, 25,000 bales of cotton, and 1,000 bales of cotton yarns—all worth about 250 million Indian rupees (Wright 1988, 129). India also made a general grant of Rs. 300 million—Rs. 100 million for the transport sector, Rs. 95 million as foreign exchange loan, Rs. 185 million as refugee rehabilitation loan, and two ships and several aircrafts worth Rs. 100 million. By June, 1972, Bangladesh received about $162 million in assistance from India—an estimated $89.5 million as food aid, $66.1 million as nonproject aid, and about $13 million as loan (Franda 1982a, 9).

Most of the assistance to Bangladesh, however, came from the United Nations, which committed $1 billion to the country's relief and rehabilitation. By June, 1972, UN assistance in aid, loans, and credits, totaled $230 million, and by June, 1973, the amount almost doubled. Total aid flow to Bangladesh, in its very first year of independence, well exceeded the total amount of aid erstwhile East Pakistan had received during the entire period of united Pakistan. Up to March, 1971, erstwhile East Pakistan received project aids worth $647 million, but by June, 1973, Bangladesh received a total of $648 million in grants, loans, and credits (Franda 1982a, 10). During the entire period of the regime, Bangladesh received over $3.32 billion in foreign aid, of which over 70 percent came from the United States, the European Economic Community, the United Nations, and the World Bank, and only 21 percent came from the socialist bloc, including India (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Sources of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh—December 1971 to June 1975 (in million US$, numbers in parentheses reflect shares in the total)

Donors	Food Aid	Commodity Aid	Project Aid	Total
A. DAC (United States and other OECD members)	601.6 (57.5)	530.1 (44.7)	310.8 (28.5)	1442.5 (43.4)
B. International institutions and agencies	258.9 (24.7)	387.4 (32.7)	369.0 (33.9)	1015.3 (30.6)
C. Socialist bloc and India	165.1 (15.8)	176.4 (14.9)	347.9 (31.9)	689.4 (20.8)
D. Total aid received (including others)	1046.5 (100)	1184.7 (100)	1089.9 (100)	3321.1 (100)

Source: Author's compilation from Table 5.1 of Sobhan (1993, 126–127).

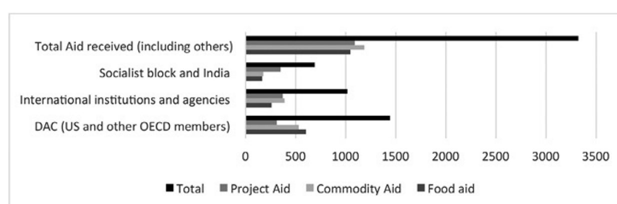


Figure 5.1 Sources of Foreign Aid to Bangladesh, 1972–1975 (in million US$)

Although Bangladesh overwhelmingly relied on India and the Soviet bloc for international assistance, most of the foreign aid to the country came from Western countries (see Figure 5.1). Even during the period of united Pakistan, of the estimated $494 million that East Pakistan received in commodity aid, more than 90 percent came from Western countries, while the share of the socialist bloc was just about five percent (Sobhan 1993, 120). The Mujib regime was thus presented with a critical strategic choice—either to reorient its foreign assistance search toward the socialist bloc, which had consistently been a marginal aid provider, or to renew its contacts with Western countries, which historically had been the substantial aid provider.

IV. MANAGEMENT OF FOOD AND FAMINE

The country's agricultural sector suffered colossal damage during the liberation war—as farmers failed to plant or harvest crops in many parts of the country, many of them were killed, and in many areas Pakistani forces burned villages, completely disrupting their lives and livelihoods. Countless numbers of cattle were slaughtered and thousands of irrigation pumps destroyed. The supply of critical agricultural materials such as fertilizer, irrigation equipment, seeds, and so on was disrupted due to almost total destruction of the transportation and communication network.

As a result, a precipitous fall in rice production seriously endangered national food security plunging the country to a near-famine situation. In 1971–72,

production of all three major rice crops—Aus, Aman, and Boro—totaled 9.8 million tons, 20 percent below the level of 1969–70, when the country produced 11.8 million tons. The main rice crop—Aman—was the worst hit; its production fell to 5.7 million tons in 1971–72, from about 6.95 million tons in 1969–70. Aus and Boro production also declined, but did so less severely (see Table 5.4). Then, standing rice crops were also damaged catastrophically due to massive monsoonal flooding. As a result, per capita food availability declined to 332 lbs in 1971–72, compared with 388 lbs in 1969–70, a year when the country imported 1.5 million tons of food grains (see Figure 5.2).

Worse still, the country confronted a near-famine situation without having enough foreign reserve to import food on an emergency basis, which led the United Nations to make an international appeal for immediate large-scale assistance. Immediately after the independence, India provided 624,000 tons of food grains, but with the UN call and the country's seaports and airports becoming operational, other countries and international agencies also joined in assisting the country. Major assistance came from the United National Relief Operation in Bangladesh (UNROB) and the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC). By June, 1972, firm commitments of food grains from multilateral and bilateral donors reached 2.16 million tons, of which, about one million tons were already delivered by then. Influx of food grains into the county increased from 98,000 tons in March, 1972, to 144,000 tons in April, 281,000 tons in May, and 372,000 tons in June, 1972 (World Bank, 1972b).

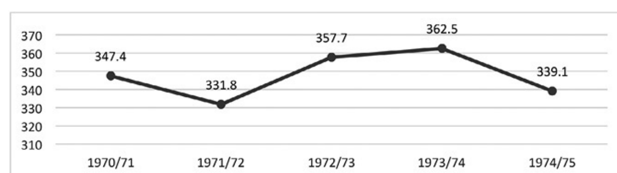


Figure 5.2 **Per capita Availability of Food in Bangladesh, 1970–1975 (lbs.)**

Table 5.4 **Aggregate Food Grains Production, Aid, Imports, and Per capita Availability in Bangladesh, 1969/70–1975/76 (in million tons, unless otherwise indicated)**

	1969–70	1970–71	1971/72	1972/73	1973/74	1974/75
Gross Domestic production	11.81	10.96	9.78	9.93	11.70	11.11
Aus	2.96	2.86	2.34	2.27	2.80	2.86
Aman	6.95	5.91	5.70	5.59	6.70	6.00
Boro	1.90	2.19	1.74	2.07	2.20	2.25
Wheat	0.10	0.11	0.11	0.09	0.09	0.12
Net production*	10.72	9.96	8.90	9.02	10.61	10.11
Food grains Imports	1.55	1.26	1.69	2.74	1.64	2.26
Rice	0.50	0.88	0.67	0.37	0.08	0.26
Wheat	1.04	1.26	1.02	2.37	1.56	2.00
Food grains import values (in US$ million)	—	—	—	320.8	308.4	544.1
Government subsidies to foodgrains (in million taka)	—	—	—	678	834	800
Food aid (in million US$, disbursed)	—	—	103.3	113.7	190.0	195.9
Foodgrains imports as a percent of food aid ∞	12.27	—	—	38	78	70
Total availability of food grains for consumption* *	—	11.22	10.73	11.82	12.33	11.90
Total requirements of food grains	70.8	—	—	11.7	12.0	12.3
Population (millions, mid-year)	388.2	72.3	72.4	74.0	76.2	78.6
Per capita availability of food (lbs.)		347.4	331.8	357.7	362.5	339.1

Notes: * 10 percent less than gross production, attributed to seed, feed and wastage. ** Total availability during 1971/72 to 1974/75 includes offtake from stocks. ∞ Taken from Sobhan (1982).
Source: Author's compilation from World Bank (1972a, 1972b, 1975, & 1976), and Tables 8.1, 8.2, 11.5, and 11.6 of Dowlah (2009).

Public Food Distribution System

Aside from mobilizing global assistance, the regime also had to undertake a herculean task to ensure distribution of food throughout the country. By mid-1972, a massive food distribution network called the Public Foodgrains Distribution System (PFDS) was launched. The network incorporated all segments of the population, including students and teachers of orphanages to universities, workers of parastatal organizations to state-owned enterprises (SOEs), and civil servants to military troops and paramilitary forces. Food assistance beneficiaries were placed under various distribution channels such as statutory rationing, modified rationing, rural rationing, flour milling, essential priorities, and so on—depending on the regime's priority to serve the recipients regularly or not.

As the country's transportation and communication system was all but ruined, planes and helicopters supplied by the Indian army, the United Nations, and the IDRC helped the government to reach remote and interior areas. By June, 1972, the regime was able to distribute a staggering 1.1 million tons of food, but by the end the year, food distribution almost doubled. Such a massive food aid and its distribution helped the regime to avert a widely predicted famine in the immediate aftermath of the war. Critics, however, pointed out that the regime geared subsidized food distribution to mainly residents of the capital city and other industrial centers, apparently to appease vocal and militant urban population. "Anybody employed or had political clout was covered by the PFDS, while rural masses who lacked political muscle received rationed goods

irregularly (Chowdhury and Haggblade 2000, 171–172).[2]

The overall food situation in the country, however, showed no sign of improvement during the entire period of the regime. On top of unrelenting natural calamities—massive floods during monsoons and subsequent droughts as well as the chronic shortage of agricultural implements such as irrigation, seed, and fertilizer, significantly affected the country's food grains production. Then, manmade vices—such as hoarding, smuggling, price gouging, and manipulation—prevailed on a scale and magnitude that the nation never experienced before. Despite almost one-third of the massive influx of foreign aid that the country received during 1972–75 came in the form of food grains, a chronic imbalance between domestic demand and production of food grains dogged the country.

As a result, the regime had to import food while receiving generous food aid from bilateral and multilateral donors. Bangladesh imported 1.7 million tons of food in 1971–71, 2.7 million tons in 1972–73, 1.7 million tons in 1973–74, and 2.3 million tons in 1974–75. In 1972–73, the nation's food import bills totaled $321 million, which decreased to $308 million in 1973–74 as food aid flow increased, and then jumped to $544 million in 1974–75, as food flow decreased (see Table 5.3 and Figure 5.3). At the same time, distribution of imported and donor-given food grains through subsidized rationing system cost the government about $100 million per year during 1972–75.[3]

The amount of subsidies granted to food was so huge that in the absence of such subsidies the entire deficit of the country's revenue budget could have been eliminated (Islam 1977, 198). In fiscal year 1974–75, for example, subsidies to food grains distribution totaled an estimated 800 million taka, more than 15 percent of the government's 5,100 million taka revenue earnings of the year. As Figure 5.4 shows, the rationed price of rice—the staple food of the country—was more than double of the government's procurement cost. As a result, food subsidies totaled 678 million taka in 1972–73, and 834 million taka in 1973–74 (see Table 5.3). Numerous were instances when food grains that Bangladesh received as relief ended up in black markets in some parts of India. Worse still, recurring food shortage and booming black markets both at home and abroad were also accompanied by runaway inflation—even notoriously unreliable official data showed 60 percent rise in the prices of food grains in the country in the first half of 1972 (World Bank 1975, 1976).

Then the magnitude of corruption that engulfed the PFDS was so egregious that the regime had to deploy armed forces on three occasions to stem the rot—in April–May 1974, November–January 1975, and January–March 1975. Such

searches resulted in the recovery of more than one million fraudulent ration cards. According to World Bank (1975, 7), confiscation of about 300,000 ration cards between November 1974 and January 1975 alone saved the national exchequer 45 million taka per year. Thus, confiscation of one million ration cards must have saved at least 150 million taka to the national exchequer. Given official exchange rate of the period at 7.28 taka per US dollar, corrupt elements of the society thus must have amassed as much as $20 million each year just from fraudulent ration cards (Dowlah 2009, 188).

On top of that, huge differences between rationed price and free-market price of some of the essentials of life contributed to booming black market (see Figure 5.3). Price of rice in the free market was more than five times higher than rationed price. Similarly, the price of sugar was two-and-a-half times higher, the price of edible oil was three and a half times higher, and the price of salt was twelve times higher than rationed prices (see Table 5.5).

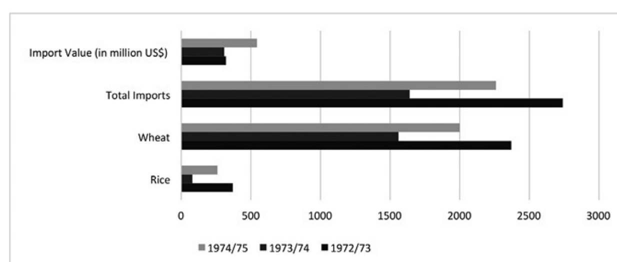


Figure 5.3 Food Imports of Bangladesh during 1972–75 ('000 tons)

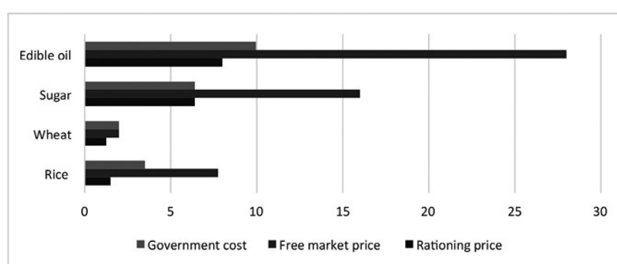


Figure 5.4 Gaps between Rationed Price, Market Price, and Government Costs in January 1975 (in Taka/2 lbs)

The Famine of 1974

By the year 1974, the country's food crisis reached its climax plunging the nation into a devastating famine. It is indeed ironic that the same regime that had succeeded in averting a widely predicted famine in 1972 failed to do so in 1974

when few had predicted it. Some left-leaning political parties did warn the government of impending famine.[4] Then, the devastating floods of 1974—the worst floods in the nation's history up to that point—raised the specter of famine. Also, as far back as in May 1973, the UN secretary general Kurt Waldheim warned of imminent starvation in Bangladesh unless its serious food shortage was addressed on an urgent basis (Dowlah, 2006).

Then, like a tragic fiction, all forces and players seemed to have come at the right place at the right time to orchestrate a devastating famine in the country. First of all, massive floods, the third year in a row, wiped out whatever the farmers could plant, and left almost nothing to harvest. By the summer of 1974, the nation's food stocks chronically depleted resulting in manifold increases in prices of food grains. Then, the government failed to import food grains commercially lacking foreign exchange. During the third quarter of the year, the regime had only $40 million in its reserves, far less than in the previous two quarters when the reserves stood at $97 million and $60 million, respectively (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.5 Gaps in Procurement Cost of Rationed Goods, Ration Prices, and Open-Market Prices, January 1975 (taka per lbs.)

	Ration Price	*Free-Market Price*	*Government Cost*
Rice	1.50	7.75	3.50
Wheat	1.25	1.99	1.99
Sugar	6.40	16.00	6.40
Edible oil	8.00	28.00	9.95
Salt	0.50	6.00	—

Source: World Bank (1975, 8).

Table 5.6 International Reserves of Bangladesh, 1973–75 (in million US$)*

Year	*Q1*	*Q2*	*Q3*	*Q4*
1973	208.3	135.0	166.5	149.3
1974	96.7	60.0	40.1	103.0
1975	207.0	250.3	205.6	144.9

Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendix of World Bank (1976). *Note*: *Quarterly averages of end-of-month balances.

At the same time, when food prices sharply increased in global market due to a shortfall in global food supply, food grains aid to the country declined sharply due to donor fatigue resulting from unacceptable levels of graft and corruption that the regime tolerated in relief and rehabilitation efforts (McHenry and Bird, 1977; Gerin-Lajoie, 1975). The country also suffered a steep deterioration in its external terms of trade—while its export prices remained more or less stable,

import prices rose sharply for many of products it imported. In 1972–73, one US dollar of exports brought in 79 cents of imports compared to 1969–70, but by 1974–75, import prices increased 2.7-fold compared with those of 1969–70 (Sobhan 1993, 14–15). As Table 5.7 indicates, overall weighted average import price index of the country increased from 156.9 to 215.4 between 1973–74 and 1974–75, when import price indexes for a whole range of essentials, such as food grains, edible oils, cotton yarn, fertilizer, cement, and petroleum products registered sharp increases.

The country's import price competitiveness was also affected by successive devaluations of its currency. In mid-1972 alone, the government devaluated currency by 55 percent in one go spiking import prices, which also encouraged smuggling to neighboring India. Then, the government also hugely increased money supply.Between December 1971 and December 1974, the country's money supply more than doubled—supply of narrow money (M1) increased by 242 percent, while that of broad money (M2) increased by 251 percent (Dowlah 2009, 194). . The country's trade balance was also affected by the fact that, facing threats from international synthetic fiber, the regime maintained low export prices for jute and jute products (Dowlah 2009, 260–262; World Bank 1972a, 12–13).

Table 5.7 Price Indices of Imports and Exports of Bangladesh, 1973–75 (1972/73 = 100)

	1973/74	*1974/75*
A. Import price index (weighted average)		
Food grains	156.9	215.4
Edible oil	160.9	207.0
Petroleum products	146.1	157.8
Crude petroleum	215.9	286.4
Raw cotton	358.3	504.2
Cotton yarn	76.0	189.1
Fertilizer	178.6	258.9
Cement	161.5	319.7
Capital goods	204.5	340.9
Other		
	115.0	**130.0**
B. Export price index (weighted average)		
	104.6	**132.9**
Raw jute		
Jute goods	104.7	124.7
Tea	101.0	128.4

Other	128.6	200.0
	122.2	**158.9**

Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendix of World Bank (1996).

An overwhelming majority of the population was affected by growing food shortages and skyrocketing food prices—consumer price index increased from 325.75 in 1972 to 457.43 in 1974, reflecting over 40 percent increase in inflation rate in two years (see Figure 5.5). At the same time, food price skyrocketed during the critical period of September 1973, and December 1974 (see Figure 5.6).

Such a runaway inflation affected agricultural laborers more severely than many others. With a sharp decline in agricultural activities, they had few opportunities for gainful employment elsewhere. As a result, real wage index of agricultural workers fell to 61.4 in 1974 from 82.6 in 1973. Industrial wages index also declined from 106 in 1973 to 77 in 1974, but the decline was relatively smaller compared with agricultural workers (see Table 5.8).

The Mujib regime's policies aggravated the situation further—facing persistent food shortages, the regime geared rationed food distribution overwhelmingly toward vocal and militant urban population, mainly to the dwellers of the capital city and some industrial centers, while relegating vast rural masses with lesser political muscles to modified rationing channels that distributed rationed goods very irregularly (Chowdhury, 1989). Over 80 percent of the country's population, which lived in rural areas and were presumably in greater need for food assistance because of successive crop failures and bad harvests, were thus effectively denied of access to rationed goods (Dowlah, 2006). The PFDS "does not feed the rural poor to any great extent nor those so destitute that they cannot afford the very low ration prices," observed the World Bank (1975, 7).

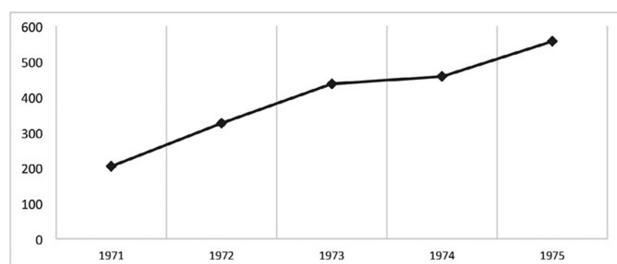


Figure 5.5 Consumer Price Index in Bangladesh, 1971–1975 (1952 = 100)

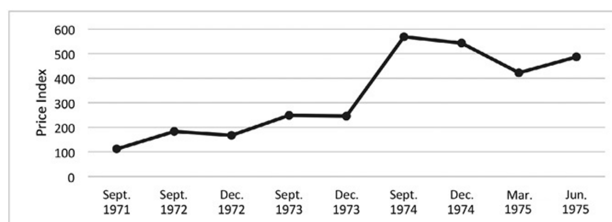


Figure 5.6 **Food Price Index, 1971–75 (1969–70 = 100)**

Table 5.8 **Agricultural and Industrial Wage Indices in Bangladesh, 1970–75 (1952 = 100)**

	1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*
Consumer price index	204.13	325.75	436.83	457.43	556.54
Agricultural wages	101	79	82.6	61.4	107.3
Industrial wages	130	140	106	77	95

Source: Author's compilation from Alamgir (1979) and Chowdhury (1985)

The Famine and the Superpowers

No discussion of the famine would be complete without referring to the role played by the United States and the former Soviet Union—the two superpowers of that time. Apparently, the regime's food procurement efforts received a devastating blow from the United States when it withheld about 200,000 tons of food grains shipments to the country in the critical months of 1974. Reportedly, President Gerald Ford recalled the food shipment to Bangladesh in retaliation for Mujib's decision to export jute sacks to Cuba. The legislation that imposed trade embargo with Cuba allowed the US president to use food aid under P.L.420 to punish countries that traded with Cuba. Unfortunately for Bangladesh, the US retaliation could not have come at a worse time—it left the country with little time to mobilize badly needed food grains from other countries.[5]

Tragically, at the same time, the Mujib regime was also rebuffed by one of its greatest allies—the former Soviet Union, which only couple of years ago had played an instrumental role in the liberation of the country. With the food crisis worsening alarmingly, in late 1973 desperate Mujib regime tried to persuade Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev to divert 200,000 tons of food grains—which the Soviet Union had procured from Australia and Canada—to Bangladesh with the understanding that Bangladesh would subsequently divert the expected food shipments from the United States to the former Soviet Union. The proposal however received a cold shoulder from the Brezhnev administration (Sobhan 1993, 126).

Eventually, the country plunged into one of the worst famines in its entire

history. Estimates of famine-related deaths ranged between official figures of 27,000 and unofficial figures of 1.5 million.[6] The famine reminded the newly independent people of the horrifying scenes of the Great Bengal Famine of 1943, only three decades ago, which caused between 1.5 million and 3 million deaths (Sen, 1981). Just in the third year of the liberation, the nation was horrified to see destitute and starving masses thronging the capital city in search of food and employment. Scores of people died of starvation on the streets—as well as in railway and bus stations and lunch terminals (Sobhan 1979). The famine instantly reversed the positive expectations that had developed after the euphoria of successful liberation war as grim realizations of the cruelty of life engulfed the nation's imagination. No other failure on the part of the Mujib regime would more thoroughly disappoint and embitter the newly liberated people than this manmade famine (Dowlah, 2006).

V. NATIONALIZATION OF INDUSTRIES AND COMMERCE

Bangladesh inherited largely a private sector-dominated economy. Agriculture, which contributed over 60 percent to the nation's GDP, was entirely in the private sector. Less than one-third of the country's industrial assets were under government control, and the transport sector, except the railways, was also overwhelmingly in the private sector. It was the dominance of the private sector that led to the emergence of large industrial conglomerates, the so-called "22 Rich Families" in the united Pakistan, which the Awami League projected as a giant sign of exploitation to galvanize the people of Bangladesh for liberation.

Prior to the country's liberation, 47 percent of the country's industrial fixed assets—725 industrial enterprises—were owned by West Pakistani families, while 34 percent of industrial fixed assets was owned by the East Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (EPIDC) and only 18 percent was owned by Bangladeshi individuals (see Table 5.9). Most of the industrial conglomerates were owned by West Pakistanis, but about one-third of the fixed assets in jute industries and that of over half of cotton and textiles industries belonged to *Bangalee* owners (Islam 1977, 216–217). The share of *Bangalee* owners would be much higher if the industries in the pipeline of the EPIDC is taken into account. In 1970, the EPIDC controlled 36 jute mills, 16 major jute exporting firms, 25 textiles, 1 sugar mill, 12 enterprises in inland water transport, and had a bank in its pipeline—all owned by *Bangalee*s (Sobhan and Ahmed 1980, 65–66).

Moreover, *Bangalee* entrepreneurs owned around 20 percent of the country's small-and medium-sized enterprises before the war, and maintained a significant presence in import-export trades, and as contractors and commission agents. The share of *Bangalee* entrepreneurs in jute exports jumped from 8 percent in 1956 to almost 50 percent by 1970, due mainly to government incentive schemes aimed at gaining an edge over India in international jute trade. In 1950, East Pakistan had only a few cotton mills, but not a single jute mill. By 1969, there were 3,130 registered factories, of which 791 were in textiles, 576 in chemicals, and 406 units in food processing. Also, the economy experienced considerable structural transformation during Pakistani period. In 1950, the manufacturing sector had only a three percent share in the country's GDP, but by 1970 the sector's share increased to 7.8 percent, with small and medium enterprises contributing over 4 percent (Humphrey 1992, 23–47).

Nationalization Decrees

Most of the industrial and commercial enterprises that Bangladesh inherited after independence were, however, small in size, volume of assets, and the scale of production. Still, the Mujib regime, bent on a socialist mode of economic transformation, nationalized most of these enterprises. By March, 1972, the government issued three presidential decrees in quick succession[7] nationalizing 725 industrial, commercial, and trading units (see Table 5.8), of which 392 were designated as state-owned enterprises (SOEs).[8] There were 12 local commercial banks in Bangladesh with 1,175 branches and some insurance companies—all were nationalized.[9] The nationalization decrees also brought over 80 percent of the country's international trade under government control. Of these SOEs, 263 were abandoned by Pakistani owners, 53 were under the EPIDC, and 75 were owned by *Bangalee*s. The rest, most of which were small industrial shops, were either returned to their former owners or turned over to government-appointed management boards (Dowlah 1997).

Table 5.9 Large-scale Industrial Ownership in Bangladesh—Before and After Nationalization

	Number of Units	Value of Fixed Assets (Million Taka)	Percent of Fixed Assets
Total industries	3,051	6137.5	100
Before nationalization			
EPIDC	53	2097.0	34
Private Pakistani	725	2885.7	47
Private Bangladeshi	20	118.8	18
Private foreign	20	36.0	1
After nationalization			
Total nationalized:	392	5637.5	92
Former EPIDC	53	2097.0	34
Private Pakistani	263	2629.7	43
Private foreign	1	—	—
Private Bangladeshi	75	910.8	15
Total in private sector:	2653	500.0	8
Private Bangladeshi	2178	208.0	3
Abandoned to be sold	462	256.0	4
Foreign participation	13	36.0	1

Source: Khan and Hossain (1989, 81).

The regime placed all SOEs under 10 newly created corporations, which came to control 7.3 percent of the country's overall GDP, 20 percent of nonagricultural GDP, 58 percent of the country's value added, 92 percent of the fixed assets, and 80 percent of the country's total exports (Sobhan and Ahmad 1980, 192). The regime kept the "commanding heights"—in jute, textile and sugar industries, raw jute trade, insurance and banking—firmly in the state sector, all corporate chiefs were appointed directly by the prime minister.

With sweeping nationalization, the share of the private sector in the country's industrial assets came down from 66 percent before liberation to 8 percent after liberation, and in order to squeeze it further in July, 1972, the regime fixed ceilings on private investment at 2.5 million taka (approximately $300,000), with a total investment not exceeding 3.5 million taka through reinvestment of profits. Foreign investment was only allowed in joint ventures with the government owning 51 percent of shares, and any equity participation with the private sector was prohibited. Restrictions were tightened further in January 1973, when the regime reserved 17 industries for the public sector leaving almost no area of industrial activity open to private sector investment. As a result, by 1974, a bloated public sector controlled about 350 SOEs—almost all industries, banks, trade, and financial institutions of the country (Dowlah 1998).

Available evidence suggests that Mujib himself was less than enthusiastic about the wholesale nationalization of the country's industries and business. The initiative for nationalization came mainly from the party's top leadership that sought expanded economic opportunities in trade, industry, and administration.

The principal architects of the nationalization were rather a group of enthusiastic academics—Nurul Islam, Rehman Sobhan, Anisur Rahman, and Mosharraf Hossain—all young economics professors of Dhaka University, whom Mujib placed at the helm of the newly created Planning Commission (discussed below). In their zeal to transform the country into a socialist state, these academics paid little attention to the existing economic and political preparedness of the country for making a transition to socialism.

Consequences of Nationalization

As a result, politics, not economic or business considerations, conditioned the performance of the SOEs.

The regime's sweeping nationalization of industries and commerce brought forth disastrous consequences for the economy. Evidently, the SOEs were managed by ruling party leaders and activists, who looted, plundered, and smuggled state properties. All powers of procuring supplies to hiring and firing of employees were concentrated in the hands of a centralized management of SOEs, which, in turn, was directly controlled by the ruling party apparatchiks.[10]

On top of that, the SOEs constantly confronted labor problems and production interruptions, resulting in a sharp decline in efficiency and profitability of the entire public sector. Soon, the public sector came under heavy criticism for rampant corruption and inefficiency; reports of SOE theft of spare parts and industrial machinery, together with unprecedented levels of smuggling, captured newspaper headlines frequently (Sobhan and Ahmad 1980; Maniruzzman 1975; Dowlah 1998).

By 1974, it became evident that the pious hopes that had driven the ill-conceived nationalization strategy were not paying dividends. Instead of becoming a source of capital accumulation for the newly independent nation, as the socialist ideologues promised, nationalization of industries consistently dragged the economy, corrupt nationalized commercial banks (NCBs) routinely pauperized state exchequer, and soon nationalization turned out to be a "false hope, a cruel delusion" (Humphrey 1992, 35) which brought "failure for the Awami League and miseries for the nation" (Ahmed 1991, 30).

Production plummeted in almost all nationalized industries during the Mujib period. In 1969–70, production of jute sector (raw jute and jute products) stood at 560,600 tons, contributing over 90 percent to the nation's export earnings, but in 1974–75, the production fell to 444,300 tons (see Table 5.10). Capacity utilization rate of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) declined from

over 70 percent to 62 percent between 1972–73 and 1974–75, and that of the Bangladesh Textiles Mills Corporation (BTMC) fell from 84 percent in 1973–74 to 70 percent in 1974–75 (see Figure 5.7). Similarly, capacity utilization in other industries, such as chemicals, tanneries, paper, sugar, and petroleum, remained far below their respective levels in 1969–70, a year before the country's liberation.

Table 5.10 Net Profits/Losses of Public Sector Corporations of Bangladesh, 1972–74 (taka in millions, figures in parentheses are ratios of profit/loss over gross sales in percentages)

	1972/73		*1973/74*		*1974/75*	
	Profit/ Loss	*Capacity Utilization*	*Profit/ Loss*	*Capacity Utilization*	*Profit/ Loss*	*Capacity Utilization*
BJIC	–283.5 (–19.7)	70%+	–332.2 (21.4)	69	–250.0 (-11.0)	62
BTIC	100.0 (13.0)	45–50%	162.7 (13.0)	84	150.0 (10.6)	70
BSgMC	–37.3 (-30.6)	45–50%	39.0 (18.5)	52	46.1 (6.8)	58
BStMC	–25.6 (-17.3)	20–45%	19.2 (7.4)	30	41.6 (8.5)	30
BPBC	–33.5 (-28.8)	45–50%	–32.7 (-14.4)	65	–47.6 (-15.3)	73
BESC	7.5 (3.8)	20–45%	41.0 (11.4)	57	44.6 (11.4)	173
BFCPC	15.0 (6.8)	20–45%	63.3 (12.5)	63 (Fertilizer)	–59.1 (11.0)	15 (Fertilizer)
BFAIC	15.1 (7.0)	45–50%	24.5 (7.0)	33	30.0 (6.1)	28
BFIDC	5.5 (50.0)	45–50%	31.0 (38.0)	74	51.0 (42.5)	93
BTC	–9.4 (-25.0)	20–45%	–6.4 (-25.4)	7	–3.3 (-7.0)	9
Total (without BJIC)	37.3 (2.0)		341.6 (10.4)		253.3 (5.7)	
Grand Total	–246.2 (7.4)		9.4 (0.2)		3.3 —	

Source: Author's compilation from World Bank (1972a and 1972b) and Table 8.1 of World Bank (1976).

BFAIC, Bangladesh Food & Allied Industries Corporation; BFIDC, Bangladesh Forest Industries Development Corporation; BTC, Bangladesh Tanneries Corporation.

BJIC, Bangladesh Jute Industries Corporation; BTIC, Bangladesh Textile Industries Corporation; BSgMC, Bangladesh Sugar Mills Corporation; BStMC, Bangladesh Steel Mills Corporation; BPBC, Bangladesh Paper and Board Corporation; BESC, Bangladesh Engineering and Shipbuilding Corporation; BFCPC, Bangladesh Fertilizer, Chemical & Pharmaceutical Corporation;

Notes: Capacity utilization of 1972/73 is the approximate estimate made by the World Bank (1972b). The figures of capacity utilization in 1973/74 and 1973/74 were taken from the Nationalized Industries Division of the Government of Bangladesh. For BFCPC, capacity utilization in 1973/74 and 1974/75 refers to fertilizer only. In those years, BFCPC's chemicals had a capacity utilization of 36% and 26%, respectively; the same for pharmaceuticals were 49% and 59%, respectively.

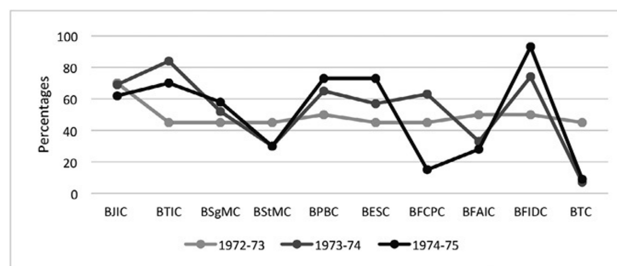


Figure 5.7 Capacity Utilization of State-Owned Enteprises, 1972–1975 (in percentages)

As Table 5.9 indicates, out of the ten public sector corporations, five made a total profit of 143 million taka in 1972–73, when the losses of other corporations totaled 408 million taka. In 1973–74, seven of these corporations made profits totaling 299.5 million taka, while losses of others totaled 362 million taka. In 1974–75, six of these corporations made profits of 121.9 million taka, while others incurred a loss of 250.6 million taka (see Figure 5.6). There can be no doubt that corruption, inefficiency, production interruptions, and other malpractices took a toll on the performances of the whole nationalized sector (Dowlah 2009, 219–222).

Thus, in just about two and a half years, between July, 1972, and December, 1974, public sector corporations cost 456.5 million taka to the national exchequer (see Figure 5.8). The largest looser was the BJMC, followed by the Bangladesh Paper and Board Corporation (BPBC) and the Bangladesh Tanneries Corporation (BTC). While in 1969–70, the country exported more than 570,000 tons of jute products, the exports fell to less than a half in 1974–75 to 230,000 tons. As a result, losses of the BJMC alone stood at 250 million taka in 1974–75. Exports of raw jute also declined drastically—from 2.83 million bales in 1972–73 to 1.55 million bales in 1974–75 (World Bank, 1976).

By 1974, Mujib, however, became disillusioned with the academics of his Planning Commission, and took measures to enlarge the role for the private sector by relaxing state monopoly on foreign trade, lifting some restrictions on foreign investment, increasing ceilings on private investment in industrial sector, and divesting some abandoned commercial establishments (Humphrey 1992, 35). In July 1974, the private sector's investment ceiling was raised to 30 million taka from 3.5 million taka (an increase of almost 850%); moratorium on nationalization was increased from ten to fifteen years; rights and interests of foreign equity investors were reinstated; and limited interaction between foreign investors and the domestic private sector was allowed (Sobhan and Ahmad 1980, 203–204).[11] By early 1975, about 120 divestitures took place, although most of

them were small and unprofitable. This move toward an expanded private sector, however, was short lived (Dowlah, 1997). With the adoption of the monolithic one-party rule—BAKSAL—in January 1975, discussed in the next chapter, the initiative, however, faced a premature death.

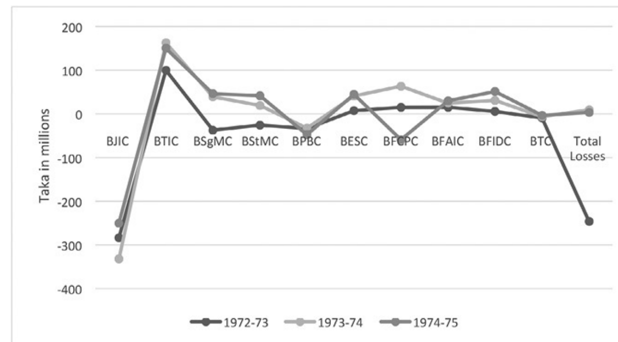


Figure 5.8 **Profit/Losses of State-Owned Enterprises in Bangladesh, 1972–1975 (in million taka)**

VI. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PLANNING COMMISION

As mentioned above, the Mujib regime adopted “socialism” as one of the core principles of the new constitution. Adoption of the principle came in recognition of important roles played by radical intellectuals and left political activists in the country’s politics since the 1960s.[12] In early 1972, the regime established the Bangladesh Planning Commission (BPC) to provide guidance to economic policymaking for establishing a full-fledged socialist system. The country had inherited a planning infrastructure from Pakistan, but the new planning agency came with more comprehensive power and responsibilities, ranging from assisting government ministries in preparation for development projects to providing technical and economic appraisals of such projects before their inclusion in plans, from conducting progress evaluations of projects after their implementation to handling of negotiations and allocation of foreign aid for such projects, and preparation of the five-year plans (Islam 1981, 38).

While the planning agency of Pakistan was manned by career civil servants, the BPC was placed under the leadership of some young academics who had long been known for their prosocialist orientations and close association with the Awami League politics and leadership,[13] which helped it to emerge as one of the most powerful centers of the government (Ahmed 1991, 201–203). Despite such an exalted status, the institutional capability of the BPC was critically imperiled from the outset as it suffered from conspicuous ideological vagueness. Although

the planners were committed to some form of socialist thinking, the leadership of the regime merely provided lip service to a socialist mode of development.

Moreover, the young academics of the BPC failed to command compliance and cooperation of the state bureaucracy. Given ambivalence of the political leadership, the top brass of the bureaucracy resisted its supervisory authority (Islam 1977, 2–7). The BPC's ability to formulate pragmatic plans was also critically imperiled because of its strained relationship with Western donors, especially with the World Bank.[14] Buoyed by postwar euphoria, as well as nationalistic and autarchic aspirations, the planners often downplayed the need for foreign assistance or demonstrated reluctance to accept donor conditionalities (Sobhan 1993, 182–191; Islam 1981, 15–23).

Framing of the First Five-Year Plan

Given the indifference of political leadership and noncooperation of state bureaucracy, the planners had to formulate the first five-year plan largely on their own. They took the country's constitution as a mandate for them to plan for a transition to a socialist economy and assumed that the liberation war had heightened social consciousness among the masses for moving to a socialist economic order (Islam 1977, 7). They also believed that the "preconditions required for building socialism" did exist in the country, and thus expected little or no resistance to a socialist transformation in a relatively homogenous society, where large-scale feudal land ownership was absent, and already insignificant private capital had suffered a crippling blow from the large-scale nationalization effort carried out in the immediate aftermath of the war. They were also optimistic that with proper reorientation the state bureaucracy would manage a socialist economy more efficiently.

Based on such lofty assumptions, the planners sketched a rather romantic vision of a successful transition to a socialist system that hinged on growth of productive forces, discouragement of unproductive consumption, and an egalitarian distribution system. The first five-year plan envisaged an expenditure of 44.55 billion taka, of which 60 percent would be mobilized from domestic sources, the country's GDP would grow by 5.5 percent annually, and agriculture would be the priority sector. The nation would be transformed into a "production-oriented society where work, discipline and savings would be the basic tenets of economic activity." They called for radical measures to free the people from "traditional values and habits," which were "generally antagonistic to the norms of productive work," and emphasized educating the masses and

raising a "political cadre" to serve as catalyst for social change (BPC 1973, 2–10).

Obviously, the planners were sadly mistaken in their diagnosis of the prevailing situation in Bangladesh. To begin with, the Awami League was a centrist party that absorbed socialist ideals as late as in 1969 just to broaden its support base, and most of its leaders came from rising middle class[15]; and in the postliberation Bangladesh, most of them were more interested in self-aggrandizement.[16] The assumption that such as regime would be capable of providing leadership to establish a "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" seemed utopian. The left parties and their cadres might have had some socialist orientation, but they were not in power. The young generation, who took part in the liberation war, largely lacked the stomach to wage another war for establishing socialism. The planners also mistook the precepts of Karl Marx, to whom socialism was a postcapitalist society, not a precursor to capitalism as manifested by Vladimir Lenin or Mao Tse-Tung. They also failed to explain how the gradualist approach of the so-called *Mujibbad* would establish socialism without a class struggle or revolution (Dowlah 2009, 231–232).

Major Objective and Strategies of the Plan

The BPC framed their plan as a "sociopolitical document" (as opposed to a merely a technical and an economic one) to realize socialist objectives through reforming the age-old land tenure system, organizing small farmers and landless labors into cooperatives, and ending subjugation of the rural poor by affluent farmers. It called for "socialization of agriculture" arguing that more than 80 percent of the country's economy depended on private-sector-controlled agriculture, a transition to socialism was all but impossible without socialization of this sector. The plan emphasized a labor-intensive investment strategy emphasizing basic consumption, sharp reduction in external dependence, and a determined national strategy for achieving autarchy in the shortest possible time.

As for the industrial sector, initially small and cottage industries were to be left to the private sector, while the large industries, especially the commanding heights, were to be brought under state control. External trade would be handled exclusively by the state through public sector enterprises and cooperatives. The private sector was to be allowed to participate only at the retail levels. Gradually, the state sector would expand further and the private sector would shrink, thus facilitating the transition to a socialist system.

The plan emphasized accelerated mobilization of domestic resources to meet

the country's development expenditures. It called for raising domestic savings to close the gaps in foreign exchange as well as for mobilizing the bulk of the savings for public investment. The plan targeted an annual GDP growth rate of 5.5 percent during the first five-year plan period (1973–78), exceeding the country's population growth rate of 3 percent per annum. It also sought to reduce dependence on foreign aid—from 62 percent in 1973–74 to 27 percent by 1977–78 (GOB, 1973).

The plans were implemented in phases through annual development plans (ADPs). It is not a surprise that most of the goals and objectives were not accomplished. For example, the planners projected economic recovery by attaining growth level of 1969–70 by fiscal year 1973/74, but neither the agricultural nor the industrial sector recovered to that level. Implementation of subsequent ADPs, for fiscal years 1973–74 and 1974–75, also fell below targets.

The 1973–74 ADP had projected an outlay of 5.2 billion taka, the actual outlay was about 4.0 billion taka only—24 percent below targets. Both agricultural and industrial outputs still lagged behind the levels of 1969–70 by 13 percent and 25 percent, respectively. Although production of food grains reached the 1969–70 level—the targets for scores of other sectors, such as irrigation, education, health and family planning, housing, roads, and transports, were not achieved.

Also, in 1972–73, the country faced a severe balance of payments crisis as import costs exceeded projections by 635 million taka, while export income fell short of the target by 220 million taka, leading to a staggering 23 percent balance of payment deficits. The situation worsened further in 1974–75 as a huge food deficit forced the country to import 2.6 million tons of food grains at exorbitant prices due to the oil shock of the early 1970s. On top of that, the government had to import an enormous amount of chemical fertilizer as an explosion in September, 1974, at the country's biggest fertilizer plant, the Ghorashal Fertilizer Factory, led to a staggering 77 percent drop in domestic urea production. As a result of the explosion, fertilizer distribution fell to 373,000 tons, 100,000 tons short of the target (Islam 1977, 135).

At the same time, the country's foreign exchange earnings fell to $393 million, against a target of $425 million. Foreign exchange reserves also dwindled to $60 million in June, 1974, from $149 million in December, 1973, and $97 million in March, 1974 (see Figure 5.9). Foreign exchange earnings from jute products declined to $86 million in 1974/75, compared to $124 million in the previous year, due to difficulties in domestic production,[17] internal marketing, and transportation, and a recession in the industrialized countries. The result of all

these developments was that the country's foreign exchange earnings fell to $397 million against a target of $474 million (Islam 1977, 140–148).

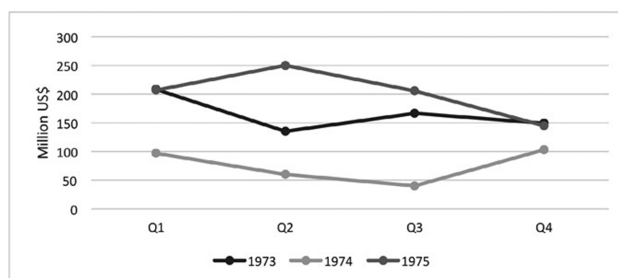


Figure 5.9 Foreign Exchange Reserves of Bangladesh, 1973–1975 (in million US$)

Performance of fiscal year 1974–75 was disappointing as well. All production targets were missed—production of food grains actually fell below the level of 1973–74, when 11.5 million tons were produced, as compared with 11.8 million in 1974–75. Production of jute—the country's principal foreign exchange earning commodity—not only failed to meet the target, but also fell below the level of the previous year. The country produced 3.9 million bales of jute in 1974–75, compared to 6 million in 1973–74 and 6.5 million in 1972–73. Overall production in the industrial sector declined as well, although some upward movement was observed in some sectors, such as sugar, cement, clothing, petroleum, and engineering products (see Table 5.11).

Despite a huge increase in the flow of foreign aid, the country continued to face a severe balance of payments crisis in 1974–75 as well. This mainly resulted from a sharp fall in jute exports, a huge increase in food imports, and a rise of over 50 percent in import prices of both food and non-food commodities in the international market between 1973 and 1975. Despite the fact that extensive administrative measures were put in place to restrict imports, the country's non-food import bills soared to $858 million, exceeding the target of $599 million, by more than 43 percent.

The foreign exchange crisis became acute as the government could hardly borrow more from commercial institutions or from the international monetary market due to limited creditworthiness. As a result, in 1974, the regime had to accept the second tranche of IMF credit and swallow stiff conditions on its fiscal and monetary policies. By December, 1974, the government's borrowing from the IMF had jumped to $162 million, from $75 million in December, 1973 (Faaland 1981, 1–13; Parkinson 1981, 179–193).

Also, the planners' call for "socialization of agriculture" was never

materialized—the sector firmly remained in the private sector throughout the Mujib regime. The regime fixed ceiling on landholding at 25 bighas (8.3 acres) per individual and 33.3 acres per family, and abolished land tax on all holdings of up to 8.3 acres, but only about 25 percent of landholdings in the country had more than 8.3 acres, 55 percent had landholdings between 2.5 acres and 8.3 acres, and the remaining 20 percent had less than 2.5 acres (Khan 1974; Blair 1978).

Table 5.11 Major Agricultural Productions in Bangladesh, 1969–75 ('000 tons)

Crops	*1969/70*	*1970/71*	*1971/72*	*1972/73*	*1973/74*	*1974/75*
Rice	11,816	10,968	9.780	9,930	11,700	11,109
Wheat	103	110	113	90	90	115
Jute ('000 bales)	7,177	6,670	4,193	6,514	6,000	3,965
Tea (million lbs)	67	69	22	53	60	67
Potato	857	849	741	747	719	866
Sugarcane	7,418	7,598	5,686	5,318	6,348	6,635
Mesta ('000 bales)	220	131	93	110	106	54
Edible oil seeds	214	210	150	163	150	168
Gram and pulses	293	296	269	222	208	223
Tobacco	91	86	76	87	41	40

Source: World Bank (1976).

Obviously, the failure of the plan can be attributed to plethora of factors, in addition what has been highlighted above. Nurul Islam (1977, 1–12), who served as the deputy chief of the BPC during greater part of the Mujib regime, blamed the following factors: (a) lack of involvement of political leaders in the planning process, (b) lack of effective cooperation of the members of bureaucracy with the BPC, (c) lack of a firm political commitment to make a transition to a socialist economy, (d) lack of adequate economic and financial data and reliance on faulty assumptions about technical input-output coefficients, (e) administrative and political constraints on the determination of intersectoral allocations strictly on the basis of economic criteria, (f) lack of coordination between ministries and executive agencies engaged in policymaking as well as in policy implementation, and (g) the impact of unforeseen factors such as economic shifts and uncertainties arising from changes in weather conditions and world trade.

A close political observer of the period, Moudud Ahmed (1991, 189–203), on the other hand attributes the failure to factors, such as: (a) the planners failed to act as technocrats, they rather portrayed themselves as doctrinaire theorists; (b) the sociopolitical assumptions of the plan were more hypothetical than real; (c) the planners failed to understand that ruling party lacked commitment or

institutional capacity for establishing socialism; (d) the plan involved serious contradictions in both its formulation and implementation stemmed from constitutional obligations to opposing principles of socialism and democracy; and (e) the ruling party had no role in formulating or implementing the plan—it was never debated in party forums, and the rank and file of the party did not share its goals and objectives.

NOTES

1. The discussion on pre-liberation status of waterways, road and highways, railways and airways is based on World Bank (1972a, 1972b) and Dowlah (2009, 203–209).

2. Sobhan (1979, 1975) also acknowledges that the regime's statutory commitment to provide rationed food to some categories of the population under all circumstances was "obviously dictated by considerations of political expediency rather than equity."

3. Based on Table 11.5 in Dowlah (2009, 259–261).

4. Moulana Bhashani, for example, even went on hunger strike pledging "fast unto death" demanding immediate governmental measures to combat "a severe famine" (Ahmed 1991, 247). Sobhan (1979) also suggests that had the government paid attention to the evolving famine situation at the outset, especially in the hard-hit areas like Rangpur, the death toll of the famine could be much smaller.

5. The US food shipment to Bangladesh was eventually resumed "after Bangladesh gave in and sacrificed its trade with Cuba," but by then the famine was largely over (Sen 1981, 136).

6. The 1974 famine remains a watershed event in the nation's history that still deserves greater investigation and analysis. Some relevant works include Dowlah (2006), Sen (1981), Ravallion (1990), and Chowdhury and Haggblade (1997).

7. The orders were as follows: the Bangladesh Abandoned Property (Control, Management and Disposal) Order of 1972 (President's Order No. 16), issued in January 1972; the Bangladesh Bank (Nationalization) Order of 1972 (President's Order No. 26); and the Industrial Enterprises Nationalization Order (President's Order No. 27), issued on March 26, 1972.

8. The regime's decision of nationalization of industries soon also followed measures aimed at "socialization of agriculture" required for making a transition to socialism in a country where more than 80 percent of agriculture was in the private sector. In August, 1972, the regime promulgated the Estate Acquisition and Tenancy Order (PO 96) by fixing a ceiling of 25 bighas (about 8 acres) on landholdings and exempting taxation on landholding of less than 25 bighas. Then, Bangladesh Landholding Limitations Order (PO 98), decreed the same month, imposed a ceiling of 100 bighas (about 33 acres) per family. Such measures, however, still left agriculture overwhelmingly in the private sector, as only 25 percent of landholdings in Bangladesh had more than 33 acres of land. See Blair (1978), Islam (1985), and Khan (1974).

9. There were also two foreign-owned banks in Bangladesh. Both had their headquarters in West Pakistan—which accounted for about 8.4 percent of commercial bank's deposits at the time of nationalization. At the time of liberation, Bangladesh had 20 foreign-owned industrial enterprises, of which 16 were pharmaceutical companies, and the others were Lever Brothers, Bangladesh Tobacco Company, Bangladesh Oxygen, and Pakistan Fibers. Total investment of these companies was less than 1 percent of the country's industrial fixed investment. The existing foreign investors were allowed to remit post-tax dividends, repatriate capital and capital gains, but faced strict conditions in respect to new investment (Alamgir 1974; Islam, 1985).

10. According to Sobhan and Ahmad (1980, 545), of the 1,169 officers recruited during 1972–75 for the SOEs, only 50 had management training and only 86 had technical training required for managing

enterprises. The same study also found that promotion to higher positions was largely based on politics and personal patronage, rather than skill and qualifications. Also, see Maniruzzaman (1975).

11. But no new foreign investment was made in Bangladesh before the collapse of the Mujib regime in mid-1975 (Lifshultz 1974, 51). Also, relaxation in foreign investment came mainly under donor pressure, especially by the United States, when Bangladesh was desperately negotiating for food assistance (Sobhan, 1979). Relaxation in domestic investment ceilings, according to Mathieu (1976, 623) came, "once the Bangladesh national bourgeoisie had accumulated enough capital to invest in industry and buy up the industrial enterprises of Pakistani entrepreneurs."

12. For details see Brass and Franda (1973), Maniruzzaman (1982, 1988), Jahan (1987), Ahmed (1991), and Baxter (1987).

13. All of them were economics professors in Dhaka University—Nurul Islam, Rehman Sobhan, Anisur Rahman, and Mossarraf Hossian. Prime minister was the ex officio head of the BPC, while Islam served as the deputy with the status of a cabinet minister. Other members of the BPC were ranked as state minister. It is widely believed that some of these academics were also involved in the formulation of the Awami League's six-point formula. By September 1974, however, only Islam remained with the BPC, others left. Sobhan (1993, 190–193) attributed this process of attrition to growing tensions between the World Bank and the leadership of the BPC.

14. The planners also expressed reservations about joining a consortium of aid-giving agencies under the leadership of the World Bank. Eventually, however, "economic necessities and accommodation of attitudes on both sides enabled a smoother working arrangement," but that did not happen until early 1976. By then all original members of the BPC were replaced, and the Mujib regime already collapsed (Parkinson 1981, 148–149).

15. See Jahan (1980) for the class character and noncommittal nature of the Awami League leadership, and Maniruzzaman (1982) for discussion of the professional standing of the Awami League parliamentary members during the Mujib regime.

16. Referring to the evolving political situation, World Bank (1974) remarked, "New men had access to political power for the first time with little conception of how to use it for purposes other than self-aggrandizement." Franda (1982, vii) observed how "people around Mujib turn from their concern with issues and principals having to do with justice, freedom and independence to matters of patronage, spoils and pay-offs almost immediately after the liberation of the country."

17. There were numerous mysterious fires in jute mills and jute godowns in different parts of the country. Production of jute was also disrupted by persistent labor unrests, sponsored by labor unions often affiliated with the ruling party.

Chapter 6

The Curtain Falls

I. INTRODUCTION

Three years of governance failures, policy adventures, corruption, and mismanagement of the Mujib regime came full circle with the devastating famine of 1974 that took tolls in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands. All but the ruling party apparatchiks became increasingly disillusioned with the state of the economy, polity, and society. Newspapers ran headlines of corruption, mismanagement, and government failures on a daily basis. Factories and industries were on fire almost routinely, industrial centers were restive, and opposition meetings and processions grew larger and violent, and the dominance of hoarders and price grousers intensified. License and permit seekers, and black marketers and smugglers dominated the country's business and commerce. The society never experienced corruption of such a scale and magnitude ever before.

In the midst of all pervasive lawlessness, a ruling party parliamentary member and a local council chairman were killed at an Eid congregation in December, 1974. The regime responded to the rapidly deteriorating law and order situation by declaring emergency rule, that is, by suspending freedom of the press and fundamental rights of the people to assemble and speak freely. Apparently, soon the emergency rule was found to be inadequate to confront the rapidly deteriorating situation, which led the regime to ban all political parties and move to one-party rule under a new political party called the Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik Awami League (BAKSAL) which was billed as the "Second Revolution."

This chapter explains the regime's move to one-party monolithic rule under

BAKSAL, the collapse of the regime with the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in a blitzkrieg military coup in mid-August, 1975, and overall economic and political performance of the regime. The next section explains the "Second Revolution" and the formation of the BAKSAL, section 3 explains the assassination of Mujib and the trial of his assassins, section 4 evaluates economic performance of the regime, and section 5 evaluates the regime's political performance.

II. THE SECOND REVOLUTION AND BAKSAL

On December 28, 1974, the Mujib regime proclaimed emergency rule in the name of national security, public safety, and ensuring essential supplies to the citizenry. The law and order situation was deteriorating so fast that there "was not a single day when murder, arson, robbery and smuggling were not reported in the local or national press" (Tayeeb 1978, 171). Mujib himself went on national television on December 15, 1974, to assert that over 3,000 Awami League leaders and activists, including four members of parliament, were killed since the independence of the country. Immediately after that, on December 25, 1974, as mentioned before, another Awami League parliamentary member and a Union Parishad chairman were murdered at an Eid congregation.[1] The emergency promulgation suspended fundamental human rights, banned all political activities, and imposed censor on the press. The emergency also came with death sanctions for hoarders, smugglers, and other such criminals considered to be serious threats to the economy and society.

Further consolidating power, on January 7, 1975, the Mujib regime moved to introduce a one-party monolithic rule under what was called the BAKSAL. The announcement of BAKSAL came from Mujib himself with a promise to herald a "Second Revolution"—the liberation war was deemed as the first revolution that was directed against foreign enemies, and the second one would be directed against internal enemies. The whole nation to be brought under a national party to establish an exploitation-free and socialist economic and administrative order as can found in other socialist countries. In his call for a "Second Revolution," Mujib asked the people to achieve economic self-reliance, control population growth, and weed out corruption in the spirit of the new revolution.

The new party BAKSAL was given legislative cover by the Fourth Amendment to the constitution enacted on January 25, 1975. The amendment vested total executive authority of the government in Mujib, and empowered him to eliminate the multiparty democracy sanctioned by the 1972 constitution. The

amendment literally turned the much-heralded 1972 constitution upside down. On February 24, 1975, Mujib abolished all opposition parties and formally established one-party state. Not only fundamental human rights were suspended indefinitely, the Fourth Amendment brought the country's judiciary and legislative branches under absolute control of the executive branch, which actually meant under totalitarian control of Mujib himself. A life-long democrat thus finally transformed himself into a full-scale dictator—everything he ever stood or strived for was now undone—the emperor had no clothes.

The Fourth Amendment was passed by a vote of 294 to none. The whole legislative process was completed in less than an hour—there was no discussion or deliberation on the amendment in the parliament. The parliamentary members actually received a copy of the proposed amendment only after they had entered the parliament. Then, they had little freedom to oppose it—since no floor crossing was allowed and any opposition to the party-position tantamount to losing membership of the parliament.

The Power Structure of BAKSAL

The BAKSAL was headed by Mujib himself—he was actually designated as the chief of the party for life. Then, it had 1 secretary general, 3 secretaries, a 15-member executive committee, and a 115-member central committee. Mansoor Ali, a close confidant of Mujib was appointed secretary general, while Sheikh Fazlul Hoque Moni (a nephew of Mujib), Abdur Razzak (close confidant of Mujib and the chief of the Rakkhi Bahini), and Zillur Rahman, another close confidant of Mujib, were made secretaries. The 15-member executive committee served as the cabinet of BAKSAL government. Besides the secretary general and the secretaries of BAKSAL, the other members of the cabinet were Syed Nazrul Islam, Khandker Moshtaque Ahmed, A. H. M. Qumruzzaman, Abdul Malek Ukil, Prof. Yusuf Ali, Monoranjan Dhar, Prof. Muzzafar Ahmed Chowdhury, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Mohiuddin Ahmed, and Gazi Golam Mostafa. Although BAKSAL was billed as a national party, none but the Awami League leaders were inducted into its executive committee.

The BAKSAL comprised of five front organizations: (a) the Jatiya Krishak League—a farmers' front, headed by Phani Bhushan Majumder; (b) the Jatiya Sramik League—a workers' front, headed by Yousuf Ali Chowdhury; (c) the Jatiya Mahila League—a women's front, headed by Sajeda Begum; (d) the Jatiya Juba League—a youth front, headed by Tofael Ahmed; and (e) the Jatiya Chhatra League—a student front, headed by Sheikh Shahidul Islam, a nephew of

Mujib. All front organizations of BAKSAL were thus headed by Awami League leaders.

Most of the 115 members of the central committee of BAKSAL were also inducted from the rank and file of the Awami League. Only ten members of the committee came from other parties, of which seven from two pro-Moscow parties, namely the National Awami Party (Muzaffar) and the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), close allies of the Awami League. The other three were Ataur Rahman Khan, a former chief minister of East Pakistan and a member of parliament belonging to the Jatiyo League, Mang Prue Syne, a tribal leader from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and Haji Mohammad Danesh, a leftist politician from the northern part of the country. The central committee also included 20 members from the civil service, the armed forces, vice chancellors of universities, and some newspaper editors.

The BAKSAL thus came as old wine in a new bottle. Although branded as a national party, it essentially remained the Awami League, with its base further widened. None from major opposition parties, such as the JSD or the NAP (Bhashani) was inducted in the BAKSAL. Thus, Mujib's "Second Revolution" relied on the same Awami League, which already failed him and his country. (Ahmed 1991, 279).

Draconian Measures of BAKSAL

By forming the BAKSAL, Mujib essentially killed democracy and reduced the country into a personal kingdom. All vestiges of democracy and rule of law vanished in thin air instantaneously—there was no guarantee of human rights, no due process of law, no option for criticism of political or administrative excesses, no room for opposition to government, and above all, no realistic means existed to change the government. The whole country was effectively placed under Mujib's personal control—it was one-man rule in all practical purposes. All powers of the government rested with the president—although the amendment provided for an elected president, no such election was required for Mujib himself. He assumed the presidency immediately after the amendment was rubber stamped by the parliament. The president, not accountable to the parliament, had the power to veto any legislation passed by the parliament unconditionally. The cabinet, appointed by the president, was accountable to him alone, not to the parliament, party, or the nation. The president had the power to appoint and remove the judges of the highest courts of the country and the president had no term limits.

The country's press and media was dealt with mercilessly—all newspapers, except the four that were brought under state ownership and control, were banned for good. As a result, the nation had two Bengali newspapers—*Daily Ittefaq*, and *Dainik Bangla*—and two English newspapers—*Bangladesh Observer* and *Bangladesh Times*. The newspapers were placed under the editorship of BAKSAL members. It made no difference which newspaper one read—they all carried the same propaganda. The only difference that any careful reader could discern was in the size of Mujib's portrait on their front pages—some newspapers, of course, had bigger portraits of Mujib than others. The country's radio and television brought under strict control of the government as well. Any distinction between news and official propaganda all but vanished.

The country's central bureaucracy was brought under direct control of the BAKSAL. For the local levels, however, the regime sought to upgrade each subdivision into a district to be administered by a politically appointed governor. Accordingly, in June, 1975, 61 new districts were created by disbanding the existing 19 districts. New districts were to be governed by district administrative councils, comprised of local members of parliament, BAKSAL representatives, and district officials belonging to civil, police, and security forces. The chief of local civil service—deputy commissioner—was slated to serve as secretary to the district council.

By mid-July, 1975, the Mujib regime announced the names of 61 governor-designates. Again most of them—44 out of 61—were Awami Leaguers, of which 27 were local parliamentary members. Among the remaining governors, seven were members of the former Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP), six were members of East Pakistan Civil Service (EPCS), and four others included Kader Siddiqui of Tangail, a military colonel, and two tribal leaders. The governors, thus selected, were scheduled to take over the districts administration with effect from September 1, 1975, after a special political training in Dhaka. The governor scheme of the BAKSAL, however, could not be materialized as the Mujib regime itself collapsed two weeks before, on August 15, 1975.

III. THE COLLAPSE OF THE REGIME

The move to launch the BAKSAL, more than anything else, expedited the day of brutal collapse of the Mujib regime. In the early morning of August 15, 1975, Mujib was killed along with most of his family members in a blitzkrieg military coup orchestrated by some disgruntled mid-ranking army officers. As elaborated

above, the country’s regular armed forces were extremely unhappy with the Mujib regime. Many in the army believed that the regime that created the Rakhhi Bahini—a paramilitary force—as a rival institution that challenged their survival and growth. The regime also fueled such fears by drastically reducing budgetary allocations for the regular armed forces while substantially increasing allocations for the Rakkhi Bahini. Apparently, the regime planned to increase the strength of the Rakkhi Bahini from about 25,000 in 1975 to 130,000 by 1980, and put one battalion of the Bahini under the command of each district governor created under BAKSAL (Maniruzzaman 1988, 180–181).

The country’s regular armed forces also armed forces also detested the regime’s signing of the nonaggression treaty with India, which made the country dependent on neighboring India for its national defense. Many in the regular army also believed that the regime failed to acknowledge their heroic contribution to the country’s liberation war. They believed that the Indian army had basically walked into Bangladesh when the country was already liberated by the Mukti Bahini, and the Indian forces deliberately kept M. A. G. Osmani, the chief of the Mukti Bahini, away from the surrender ceremony at the Suhrawardy Uddayan on December 16, 1971, in order to rob the Bahini of its glory of liberating the country.[2] There was also considerable consternation in the regular armed forces about the induction of Mujib’s son Sheikh Jamal into the military—many saw Jamal’s Sandhurst training as a ploy to place him in a top military position. Such apprehension gained currency as Mujib placed two of his nephews—Sheikh Moni as secretary of BAKSAL and Sheikh Shahid as chief of BAKSAL student front.

Finally, some mid-level army officers, especially those who masterminded the coup, were personally disgruntled with Mujib himself. During the regime’s military crackdown on the hoarders and smugglers in 1974, three majors—Shafiqur Rahman Dalim, S. J. Noor, and M. Shahriar—arrested several ruling party leaders, including a member of parliament, and implicated Mujib’s brother, Sheikh Naser, in smuggling with India. Apparently, instead of punishing offenders, Mujib summarily dismissed these officers. Also, Dalim’s wife was allegedly assaulted at a wedding reception by two sons of Gazi Golam Mostafa, the notorious chief of Mujib’s relief operations. Apparently, Dalim met with Mujib personally to lodge complaints in this regard, but instead of giving him a hearing, “Sheikh Mujib rebuked Dalim for not having come through proper channels and threatened disciplinary action against him. Dalim returned back to the barracks and vowed to avenge the insult to his wife” (Maniruzzaman 1988,

185). Eventually, all three officers—Dalim, Noor, and Shahriar—were among the masterminds of the military coup that brought down Mujib.

Although Mujib's assassination horrified the nation, unsurprisingly at that time it prompted little protest from among the military, the intelligentsia, the students, the masses, the media, or the rank and file of the Awami League. After all, the people of the country were accustomed to military rule for decades, and had all but very brief interlude of civilian rule by that time. To most people, the military rule came as a "Pakistani heritage" of military intervention "to stop corrupt and short-sighted political leaders from fritting away the assets of the nation," and after all, under the Mujib regime "spectacular corruption" reached "all the way up to his (Mujib's) close associates and relatives" (Oren 1976, 19).

Initially, however, there were considerable speculation about the involvement of foreign powers, especially the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), in the brutal killing of Mujib and his family members in just few months after he introduced one-party rule in socialist pattern. Exponents of this line of thought argued that Mujib might have annoyed the United States by introducing the one-party rule by taking side with the former Soviet Union and pro-Moscow political elements at home. After all, only a few months ago, in September, 1973, Chile's Marxist president Salvador Allende was reportedly killed in a coup d'état orchestrated by the CIA.

The involvement of the CIA in the assassination of Mujib, however, still remains mysterious. Lawrence Lifschulz (1979), a foreign journalist, on the basis of declassified US documents and interviews with CIA officials and well-informed sources in Bangladesh, concluded that American embassy officials in Dhaka not only had prior knowledge of the coup, but also had discussed the possibilities of a coup six months prior to Mujib's death. He also came to the conclusion that the links of the conspirators of the coup that killed Mujib with the United States dated back to the period of Mujibnagar government, but the dividing line between American foreknowledge of the conspiracy to kill Mujib and the actual complicity in the killing of Mujib was very thin.

Some also attributed the killing of Mujib to neighboring India arguing that India had reasons to be concerned with a prosperous independent state across its borders, which might provoke secessionist movements among insurgency-ridden "seven sisters"—Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, and Assam. They also argued that India was worried about Mujib's personal popularity in the Indian state of West Bengal and that a successful former East Bengal might entice the people of West Bengal to join Bangladesh.[3]

It was also argued that Indira Gandhi supposedly felt betrayed when Mujib joined the Islamic Summit in 1973 without consulting her in advance. Apparently, Indira Gandhi was also annoyed by the warm reception accorded to Pakistan's President Bhutto during his Dhaka visit on June 23, 1975 (Dixit, 1999; Khatib, 1981).

The civilian role in the coup that killed Mujib still remains shrouded in mystery. Speculations have it that Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed, a cabinet member of Mujib government who assumed the presidency of the country within hours of Mujib's assassination, and Taheruddin Takhur, a journalist who served as state minister for the Mujib government, were directly involved in the conspiracy. It is, however, very striking that almost all top-ranking members of the BAKSAL, and former Awami League, joined Mushtaque government within hours of Mujib's assassination. Immediately after the collapse of the Mujib regime, the Mushtaque government shielded the military killers of Mujib and his family members through an indemnity order. Some of the killers also served the Mushtaque government in diplomatic and other capacities.

In 1997, 21 years after the military coup, however, Sheikh Hasina, Mujib's eldest daughter who survived the onslaught on her family in 1975, became the prime minister of the country, and pressed charges against the killers for murdering her father and other family members. Court proceedings indicate that three colonels—Syed Faruqur Rahman, Shariar Rashid Khan, and Khandaker Abdur Rashid—masterminded the coup along with dismissed major Shariful Huq Dalim. In the early hours of August 15, 1975, they killed 11 people at Mujib's Dhanmondi residence—Mujib, his wife Fazilutnnessa, and their three sons—Sheikh Kamal, Sheikh Jamal, and Sheikh Russell, along with their daughters-in-law—Sultana Kamal and Rosy Jamal, and Mujib's brother, Sheikh Nasser.

A District Court of Dhaka, in a historic verdict on November 8, 1998, sentenced all 15 accused ex-army personnel to death. The convicted were Khandaker Abdur Rashid, Noor Chowdhury, Shariful Huq Dalim, Abdul Aziz Pasha, Rashed Chouhdury, A. K. M. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Syed Faruqur Rahman, Sharier Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, Abdul Majed, Moslehuddin, Kismat Hashem, Nazmul Hossain Ansar, and Ahmed Shariful Hossain. However, only five of the convicted were in government custody—Syed Faruqur Rahman, Sharier Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, Mohiuddin Ahmed, and A. K. M. Mohiuddin Ahmed—the rest were at large.

On May 1, 2001, a High Court Bench upheld death sentences of 12 of the 15

convicts, and acquitted the three others—Kismat Hashem, Nazmul Hossain Ansar, and Ahmed Shariful Hossain. After a hiatus of the legal proceedings during the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) regime of Khaldea Zia (2001–06), the trail of the killers of Mujib resumed in 2008 when the Awami League returned to power again under Hasina's leadership. On January 28, 2010, five of the convicted army officers, who were in the custody of government, were hanged in Dhaka central jail. The hanged were Faruk Rahman, A. K. M. Mohiuddin Ahmed, Bazlul Huda, Mohiuddin Ahmed, and Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan. The others are believed to be still absconding abroad. Trial of Mujib's killers is described in greater details in the last chapter.

IV. THE REGIME'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The regime's overall economic performance had been disappointing no matter whether one looks at economic growth rates, levels of domestic resource mobilization, and patterns of public expenditures, international trade or aid. To provide a context, at the time of the liberation war, Bangladesh was one of the most populous countries on earth with 73.4 million people—more than 80 percent of them lived in absolute poverty. The country's gross national product (GNP) was around $4.5 billion, and per capita income hovered around $50–$70 only. Agricultural sector contributed about 60 percent to the economy—the highest quantile of the population owned about 35 percent of the country's land, while the lowest quantile owned about one percent. An embryonic industrial sector contributed less than 7 percent to its GNP, and literacy rate in the country was less than 20 percent (see Table 6.1).

Economic Growth

The liberation war took a heavy toll on the nation's economy—in fiscal year 1971–72, gross domestic product (GDP) dipped by 14 percent. The next year, in 1972–73, the economy registered a growth rate of 7.5 percent, but such a high growth rate was not due to higher output, it was due to extremely high negative growth of previous year. In fact, compared with 1969–70, in 1972–73, national output registered sharp fall—rice and jute production fell by 15 and 28 percent, respectively, and industrial output, exports and imports of non-food items fell by 30 percent (BPC, 1973). In 1973–74, the economy grew by 9.5 percent, but then next year, in 1974–75, growth rate plummeted to only 2 percent (see Table 6.2). During the entire period of the Mujib regime, the economy could not reach the

prewar level (1969–70) of performance, which was eventually reached in 1975–76, after the collapse of the regime (see Figure 6.1). Between 1972–73 and 1974–75, the agricultural sector's share in the country's GDP declined from 64.4 percent to 58.7 percent, and service sector's share slightly increased as the industrial sector's share barely moved.

Table 6.1 Socioeconomic Data Prior to the Emergence of Bangladesh, 1970–71

GNP at market prices (1970)	U$4,500 million
Share of agricultural sector	59.4%
Share of industrial sector	6.6%
Exports of goods (1970)	US$513
Imports of goods (1970)	US$639
Per capita income (1972)	US$50 to $70
Taka-US Dollar Exchange rate (1972)	Tk8.0 per US$
Foreign exchange reserve (Feb., 1972)	US$23.7 millions
Income distribution (1969)	
Highest quintile	40%
Lowest quintile	9%
Absolutely poor (1968/69)*	84.1% (households)
Land ownership distribution (1971)	
Highest quintile	35%
Lowest quintile	1%
Population and health characteristics	
Population (1972, millions)	**73.4**
Male	**37.7**
Female	**35.7**
Growth rate	**2.67**
Labor Force (1970/71)	**24.84 million**
Urban**	1.66 (million)
Rural**	23.18 (million)
Life expectancy, male (1972)	

	46.1
Life expectancy, female (1972)	**46.5**
Population per physician (1969)	8,800
Population per hospital bed (1969)	9,400
Adult literacy rate (1969)	18%
Crude birth rate (per 1,000 population)	50
Crude death rate (per 1,000 population)	20
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	141

Notes: *Taken from Khan (1976, 15), who categorizes households having a per capita monthly income of 23.61 taka, corresponding to per capita calorie intake by the family of 1945 K.cals—90% of the recommended intake, as absolute poor.* *Taken from Khan (1972, 12).
Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendixes of World Bank (1972a, 1972b, 1975, and 1976).

Agricultural Production

During the entire period of the regime, the country's rice production could not be recovered to the level of 1969/70, when it totaled 11.8 million tons. In 1971–72 fiscal year, in the midst of the liberation war, rice production dipped to 9.8 million tons, registering about 17 percent decline compared with that of 1969–70—the previous normal year. In 1972–73, rice production increased barely—just by 1.5 percent—compared with that of 1970–71. But in 1973–74, rice production improved significantly to 11.7 million, but then again fell to 11.1 million in 1974–75 (see Table 5.11). In all these years, 1972–75, rice production failed to keep up with growing demand—when the country's food requirements increased at a constant rate of 300,000 tons per year due to rapid population growth.

Production of the country's flagship export commodity—jute—also fell sharply and never recovered to the preliberation level during the period of Mujib regime. The country produced 7.2 million bales of jute in 1969–70, but in 1971–72, production dropped by more than 40 percent, to 4.2 million bales. In 1972–73, jute production increased by 55 percent, compared with the previous year, to 6.5 million bales, but then fell to 6.0 million bales in 1973–74. In 1975–75, jute production declined by more than 30 percent, compared with the previous year (see Figure 6.2). Production of tea, another major export commodity of the country, however, reached the level of preliberation period by 1974–75 (see Figure 6.3), but none of the other major agricultural products could accomplish the same feat during the period of Mujib regime.

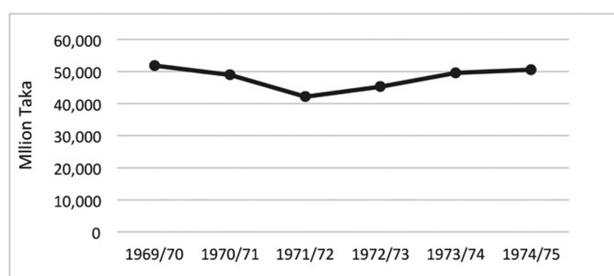


Figure 6.1 **Gross Domestic Product of Bangladesh, 1969/70–1974/75**

Table 6.2 **Aggregate Economic Indicators of Bangladesh, 1972–75**

		1969/70	*1970/71*	*1971/72*	*1972/73*	*1973/74*	*1974/75*
1	Gross domestic product (million taka, in 1972–73 prices)	51,833	48,993	42,147	45,300	49,606	50,598
2	Annual economic growth (%)	—	–5.5	–14	7.48	9.5	2
3	Agricultural sector's share in GDP (%)	61.4	62.1	64.4	60.1	61.1	58.7
4	Industrial sector's share in GDP (%)	8.3	7.4	4.7	7.3	7.6	7.4
5	Service sector's share in GDP (%)	30.3	30.5	30.9	32.6	32.3	33.9
6	Cost of living index (1971/72 = 100)*	—	—	100	148	216	326
7	Percentage change in cost of living (point to point)	—	—	—	48	22	51
8	Money supply (millions)**	4,290	3,875	6,795	8,079	9,378	9,003
9	Percentage change in money supply (Dec. 1971 = 100)	111	100	175	208	242	232

Notes: *Cost of living index: July 1972 = 100, June 1973 = 148, June 1974 = 216, and January 1975 = 326.
** Money supply in December of 1970, through 1974, and in March for 1975.
Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendixes of World Bank (1972a, 1972b, 1975, and 1976).

Industrial Output

In 1969–70, the country produced about 560,000 tons of jute products of all types—hessian, sacking, carpet backing, and so on, a level never reached during the entire period of the Mujib regime. In 1971–72, the country's production of jute good goods registered more than 40 percent decline, compared with that in 1969–70, as production fell to 315,200 tons. In 1972–73 and 1973–74, jute

goods production increased to 446,300 tons and 500,100 tons, respectively, but then fell to 444,300 tons. Thus, the highest level of jute goods production was attained in 1973–74, when the country reached about 90 percent of preliberation level (see Figure 6.4).

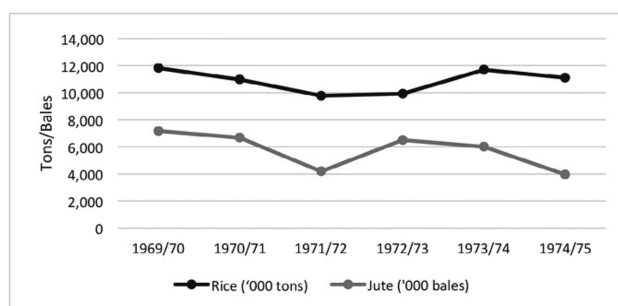


Figure 6.2 **Rice and Jute Production in Bangladesh, 1969/70–1974/75**

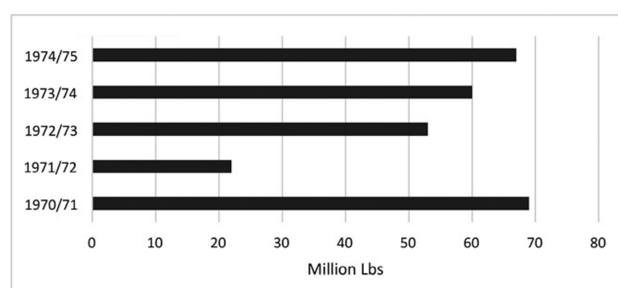


Figure 6.3 **Tea Production in Bangladesh, 1969/70–1974/75 (million lbs)**

The experience with exports of jute products was the same. In 1969–70, the country exported 498,200 tons of jute goods, but in 1973/74, jute exports fell to 438,100 tons, or about 77 percent of the benchmark year (see Table 6.3). Also, the cost of jute products exceeded the sales price by about 20 percent. As a result, state-run jute mills ran at a loss of 283.5 million taka in 1972–73, 332.2 million taka in 1973–74, and 250 million taka in 1974–75 (see Table 5.10).

Much of the debacle with industrial output had to do with the regime's wholesale nationalization of industries and commerce back in 1972, immediately after the liberation war. As explained in the previous chapter, nationalization had been a drain on the economy. Out of the ten public sector corporations that controlled the nationalized industries and commerce, five made a total profit of 143 million taka in 1972–73, while the losses of other five totaled 408 million taka. In 1973–74, seven of these corporations made profits of 299.5 million taka, while losses of the others totaled 362 million taka. In 1974–75, six of the corporations made profits of 121.9 million taka, while the other three incurred a

loss of 250.6 million taka. Among the nationalized corporations, the BJMC—which handled the country's flagship jute exports—was the largest loser (see Table 5.10).



Figure 6.4 Jute Goods Production and Exports, 1969/70–1974/75

Table 6.3 Production and Exports of Jute Goods in Bangladesh, 1969–1975 ('000 tons)

Period	*Production*					*Exports (Shipments)*				
	Hessian	*Sacking*	*Carpet Backing*	*Others*	*Total*	*Hessian*	*Sacking*	*Carpet Backing*	*Others*	*Total*
1969/70	227.7	279.3	33	20.6	560.6	204.2	232	34	28	498.2*
1970/71	199.4	172.8	40.5	26.9	239.6	172.6	146.1	42.5	20.7	381.9
1971/72	121	145.6	35.5	13.2	315.2	76.7	100.5	32.7	11.1	221
1972/73	155.1	210.4	53.8	27	446.3	163.1	169.8	50	28.7	411.6
1973/74	172.3	227.2	65.7	34.9	500.1	144.8	206.1	61.4	25.8	438.1
1974/75	146.1	227.9	40.4	29.8	444.3	136.6	181.4	42.8	17.9	231.8

Note: * Does not include exports of about 74,000 tons to West Pakistan.
Source: World Bank (1976).

Inflation, Wages, and Money Supply

Inflation plagued the economy throughout the period of Mujib regime—mainly due to explosive combination of declining national output, increasing population, and hoarding and smuggling pushing up requirements of imports of essentials, and precipitous increase in the country's money supply. The cost of living index jumped to 326 in 1974–75 from base year of 1971–72, registering an annual inflation rate of 48 percent in 1972–73, 22 percent in 1973–74, and 51 percent in 1974–75 (see Table 6.2).

Compared with 1969–70, in December, 1974, the country's agricultural price index increased to 447, food price index to 543, the industrial price index to 573, and the fuel and lighting commodities price index to 491—reflecting 400–500 percent increases in respective price indexes in just four to five years (see Table

6.4).

Industrial wages—wages of workers of nationalized industrial enterprises—registered a sharp decline during the Mujib regime—while wage rate index increased from 106 to 221—more than double, cost of living indexes increased from 108 to 445—more than quadruple, resulting in plunging of real wages by a half in a matter of three years (see Table 6.5). As wages lagged behind significantly, fixed-income earners, including government employees, industrial workers as well as small and marginal farmers suffered tremendously, while black marketeers, import-export traders, and hoarders benefited.

Money supply during this period routinely exceeded economic growth as the government failed to control budgetary expenditures, mobilize domestic resources, and manage public sector enterprises. The country's money supply—both narrow money (M1) and broad money (M2)—more than doubled between December, 1971, and August, 1975 (see Table 6.6 and Figure 6.5), when credit advances to public sector corporations and government borrowing totaled 2.5 billion taka annually (World Bank 1975, 22–24).

Table 6.4 Indices of Wholesale Prices in Dhaka, 1971–75 (1969/70 = 100)

	Sept., 1971	*Sept., 1972*	*Dec., 1972*	*Sept., 1973*	*Dec., 1973*	*Sept., 1974*	*Dec., 1974*	*Mar., 1975*	*June, 1975*
Agricultural index (general)	117	176 (50)	169 (24)	218 (28)	216 (90)	437 (100)	447 (106)	434 (85)	400 (44)
Food index (general)	112	183 (63)	168	249 (36)	246 (46)	569 (128)	543 (121)	422 (-26)	487 (40)
Industrial index (general)	139	274 (97)	267	244 (–11)	274 (3)	408 (67)	573 (109)	498 (57)	469 (33)
Fuel and lighting (general)	154	208 (55)	230	250 (20)	314 (36)	495 (98)	491 (56)	312 (–17)	385 (25)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentage increases over the previous year.
Source: Author's compilation from Table 9.3 (World Bank, 1976).

Table 6.5 Industrial Wage Rate Indexes of Bangladesh, 1971–75 (1969–70 = 100)

Year	*Wage Rate Index*	*Cost of Living Index of Industrial Workers*	*Wage Rate Index Deflated By the Cost of Living Indexes*
1971–72	106.50	108.12	98.50
1972–73	130.74	198.46	65.88
1973–74	173.07	268.03	64.57
1974–75	221.31	447.60	49.44

Source: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics. 1978. *Monthly Statistical Bulletin*. Dhaka: Government Printing Press. November.

Table 6.6 Money Supply in Bangladesh, 1971–75 (in million taka)

	Dec., 1971	June, 1972	Dec., 1972	June, 1973	Dec., 1973	June, 1974	Dec., 1974	June, 1975	August, 1975
Narrow money (M1)	3,875	4,875	6,795	6,960	8,079	8,169	9,378	8,145	7,791
% Change	100	125	175	180	208	211	242	210	201
Broad money (M2)	5,460	6,992	9,341	9,891	11,524	12,165	13,683	12,877	12,299
% Change	100	128	171	181	211	223	251	236	225

Note: June figures represent end-of- the-month figures. Percentage change calculated with December 1971 = 100.
Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendix (World Bank, 1976).

Budgetary Policies

Budgetary policies of the regime overwhelmingly depended on external assistance. Foreign aid, as loan financing of the budget, constituted 107.8 percent of the budget for 1972–73, 120.4 percent in 1973–74, and 203.4 percent in 1974–75. The share of foreign aid and grants in the nation's annual development budget rose to 62 percent in 1973–74, and crossed 85 percent in 1974–75. The revenue budget, on the other hand, was in red throughout the period of the regime—with a deficit of 678 million taka (72%) in 1972–73, 834 million taka (56%) in 1973–74, and 900 million taka (54%) in 1974–75 (see Table 6.7).

Domestic revenue collection jumped from 2.23 billion taka in 1972–73 to 3.77 billion taka in 1973–74, and then to 5.10 billion taka in 1974–75—thus more than doubled in roughly two years, but actual collection fell short of target every year and due to runaway inflation real value of government revenue fell sharply. Public expenditures were overwhelmingly geared to food subsidies, which constituted 27 percent of revenue expenditures in 1972–73 and remained over 20 percent in the next two fiscal years. Revenue expenditures allocated to defense, however, fell slightly from 13 percent in 1973–74 to 12 percent in 1974–75. In 1972–73, over 40 percent of development allocations went to agricultural and rural development sectors, which remained substantial in subsequent years as well. Allocations to the transport and communications sectors rose from 29 percent in 1972–73 to 35 percent in 1973–74, and remained above 30 percent in 1974–75 (see Table 6.7).

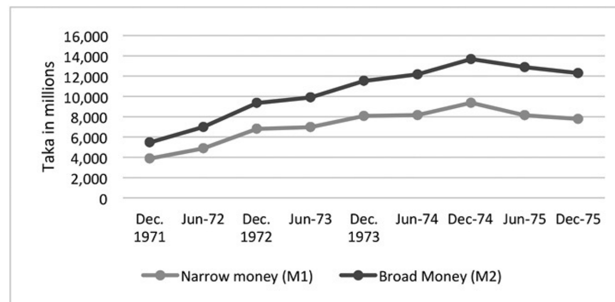


Figure 6.5 **Money Supply in Bangladesh, 1971–75 (Taka in millions)**

International Trade

The country's flagship export commodity jute enjoyed rising global prices throughout the Mujib period, but exports revenue from raw jute declined from $126 million in 1972–73 to $124 million in 1973–74, and then to $86 million in 1974–75—declined by more than 30 percent in three years due mainly to precipitous fall in volume. Raw jute exports fell from 2.83 million bales in 1972–73 to 2.66 million bales in 1973–74, and then 1.6 million bales in 1974–75. In respect to jute products, the scenario was still more depressing. Although export prices of per unit jute increased from $436 in 1972–73 to $441 in 1973–74, and then $560 in 1974–75—a hefty 28 percent increase over the 1972–73 period, exports revenue of jute products increased only marginally, from $179 million in 1972–73 to $198 million in 1973–74, and $213 million in 1974–75—by less than 20 percent in three years (see Table 6.8).

Exports revenue of tea, however, increased from $9.4 million in 1972–73 to $14.7 million in 1973–74 and then to $22 million in 1974–75—a hefty increase of more than 130 percent in three years—but much of this increase came from rising international prices, not from volumes. During this period, unit prices of tea in international market doubled—increased to $0.42 in 1974–75 from $0.21 in 1972–73. Exports revenue from leather goods, however, remained stagnant at $15.8 million in 1972–73 and 1973–74, and then increased to $22 million in 1974–75. Overall, exports revenue during the Mujib regime totaled $340 million in 1972–73, $362 million in 1973–74, and $358 million in 1974–75 (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.7 **Revenue and Expenditure Budgets of Bangladesh, 1972–75 (million taka unless otherwise indicated. Numbers in parenthesis are percentages)**

		1972–73		1973–74		1974–75	
		Budget	*Revised Budget*	*Budget*	*Revised Budget*	*Budget*	*Revised Budget*
1	A. Revenue collection:	2,916	2,236	4,113	3,774	5,594	5,100
	Tax revenue	2,684	1,886 (83.5)	3,459	2,911 (77.1)	4,558	4,290 ()
		–97	370 (16.5)	–84.1	863 (22.9)	–61.5	810
	Nontax revenue	231		654		1,036	()
		(8.0)	2,914	–15.9	4,607	–18.5	
	B. Revenue expenditures:						6,000
		2,184	202 (5.9)	2,953	600 (13)	4,908	
			783 (26.9)		963 (20.9)		—
	Defense	400	–678	470	–834	710	
		–18.3		–15.9		–14.5	800 (12.2)
	Food subsidy	—		—		600	–900
				—		–12.2	
	C. Revenue budget deficit/surplus	732		1,160		686	
2	Development expenditures:	5,010	3,978	5,203	4,000	5,250	5,100
	Agriculture, rural development, and water	1,792	1,350 (33.9)	1,600	1,362 (34)	1,615 (32.7)	—
		–35.8	1,157 (29.1)	–30.5	1,408 (35.2)	1,685 (32)	
	Transport and communication sector	1,431		1,678			—
		–28.5		–31.9			
3	Overall budget deficit/surplus financed by:	–4,279	–4,656	–4,093	–4,834	–4,564	-6,000
	Net capital receipts						
		–82	640	387	60	306	200
		–1.9	–13.7	–9.5	–1.2	–6.7	
	Foreign grants and aid						
		3,750	3,183 (68.4)	3,520	2,980 (61.7)	3,940 (86.3)	5,730
		–87.6	833 (17.9)	–86	1,794 (37.1)	318 (7.0)	—
	Deficit financing	610		186			70
		–14.3		–4.5			

Source: Author's compilation on the basis of Tables 5.1 and Tables VI.2 of World Bank (1975).

Table 6.8 Merchandise Exports and Imports of Bangladesh, 1972–75

	1972/73			1973/74			1974/75		
	Quantity (million)	*Unit Price (US$)*	*Value (US$), millions*	*Quantity (million)*	*Unit Price (US$)*	*Value (US$), millions*	*Quantity (million)*	*Unit Price*	*Value (US$), millions*
Exports									
Raw jute (bales)	2.83	44.5	126	2.66	46.6	124	1.55	55.5	86
Jute goods (tons)	0.41	436	179	0.44	440.9	194	0.38	560.5	213
Tea (lbs.)	44.8	0.21	9.4	47.5	0.27	14.8	51.8	0.42	22
Leather	—	—	15.8	—	—	15.8	—	—	26
Fish and shrimp	—	—	4.4	—	—	7.9	—	—	4.1
Others	—	—	5.6	—	—	7.1	—	—	6.9
Total exports			340			361.6			358
Imports									
Consumer goods									
Food grains (tons)	2.78	115	320.8	1.66	185	308.4	2.29	238	544.1
Edible oil (tons)	—	—	—	0.05	702	34.4	0.05	768	37.9
Cotton textiles (yards)	—	—	—	59	—	18.5	—	—	9.1
Intermediate goods									
Petroleum products (tons)	0.13	44	5.7	0.51	95	48.6	0.45	126	56.6
Crude petroleum (tons)	0.73	24	17.5	0.45	86	38.6	0.82	121	98.7
Raw cotton (bales)	0.32	175	41.8	0.26	133	34.5	0.2	331	66.2
Cotton yarn (bales)	0.04	309	13.6	0.06	552	33.1	0.01	800	5.6
Fertilizer (tons)	0.24	117	28	0.13	189	23.8	0.23	374	86.1
Cement (tons)	0.32	22	7	0.4	45	18	0.33	75	24.6
Capital goods	—	—	100	—	—	155.2	—	—	135
Others	—	—	192.6	—	—	204.5	—	—	338.5
Total Imports			727			917.6			1,402.40
Merchandise Trade Balance			–387			–556			–1,044.20

Source: Author's compilation on the basis of Tables 3.1 and 3.2 of World Bank (1976).

Given persistent food crises, the country's major import commodity during the

regime was food grains. The country imported a staggering 2.8 million tons of food grains in 1972–73 at a cost of $320 million, 1.7 million tons at a cost of $308 million in 1973–74, and 2.3 million tons at a cost of $544 million in 1974–75. Import costs for food grains increased astronomically as international unit price of food grains rose by more than 100 percent during the period—from $115 per ton in 1972–73 to $236 in 1974–75.

The country's other major imports included intermediate goods, such as petroleum products, cotton and yarn, fertilizer, and cement, the cost of which increased from $100 million in 1972–73 to $197 million in 1973–74, and $313 million in 1974–75. Similarly, import bills for capital goods increased from $100 million in 1973–73 to $253 million in 1974–75. Much of the increase in imports came from sharp increase in import prices.

Overall, the newly independent country, which began its journey with an empty international reserve, was burdened with import costs running from $727 million in 1972–73 to $918 million in 1973–74 and to $1.4 billion in 1974–75. The country's merchandise trade balance had been negative throughout the period of regime—it was $388 million in 1972, then increased to $546 million in 1973–74, and finally to a staggering $1.1 billion in 1974–75 (see Table 6.8).

Aid Dependence

Between December 17, 1971, and June 30, 1975, Bangladesh received a total of $3.32 billion in foreign aid, of which 43.4 percent came from the OECD countries, 31 percent came from international and multinational institutions and agencies, and about 21 percent came from the socialist bloc, including neighboring India (see Table 5.3). One-third of the aid flow consisted of food grains, the rest were project and nonproject aids aimed at rehabilitation and reconstruction of the war-ravaged economy (see Table 6.9). The aid flow constituted 9.5 percent of the nation's GDP in 1972–73, 4.8 percent in 1973–74, and 8.5 percent in 1974–75. In 1972–73, foreign aid constituted more than 75 percent of the country's imports bills, but the share dropped to 51 percent in 1973–74, and then rose to 70 percent in 1974–75 (see Figure 6.6).

Total disbursed grants and loans to Bangladesh from all international and multinational donors stood at $227.3 million in 1971–72, which increased to $420.6 million in 1972–73, then to $640 million in 1973–74, and $923.7 million in 1974–75, against commitments of $590.8 million, $972.6 million, $587.1 million, and $1,299 million, respectively. At the time of collapse of the Mujib regime, the amount of loans and grants in the pipeline stood at $1.3 billion—not

an insignificant amount by any stretch of imagination (see Table 6.10 and Figure 6.7).

Table 6.9 Aid Dependence of Bangladesh, 1972–76

Fiscal Year	GDP (billion taka)	Aid Disbursement (billion taka, in 1972–73 prices)	Aid as Percentage of GDP	Aid as Percentage of Loan Financing Budget	Aid as Percentage of Investment Development	Gross Domestic Savings as Percentage of GDP	Aid as Percentage of Imports (in 1972–73 prices)	Share of Foreign Aid in Development Budget
1972/73	45.1	4.3	9.5	107.8	126.1	1.5	75.8	—
1973/74	50.6	2.4	4.8	120.4	65.6	1.5	50.8	67.9
1974/75	52.3	4.4	8.5	203.4	78.4	0.9	69.7	—
1975/76	58.7	6.6	11.3	141.2	107.5	1.8	65.7	81.4

Source: Author's compilation on the basis of Table 1.2 of Sobhan (1993, 9).

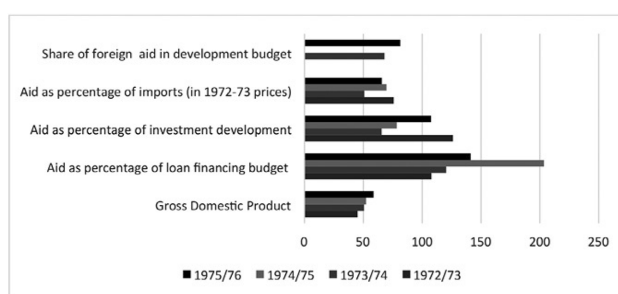


Figure 6.6 Aid Dependence of Bangladesh, 1972/73–1975/76

Despite such a massive international support, the overall economic performance of the Mujib regime had been all but disappointing. Its economic policies, especially the wholesale nationalization of industries and commerce, strangulation of the private sector, deficit-ridden budgetary policies, and expansionary monetary policies, massive corruption in food and relief distribution, and overwhelming dependence on foreign aid contributed to chronic macroeconomic instability, runaway inflation, and corruption, smuggling and black marketing of a level and magnitude that the nation never experienced before.

Industrial workers were disillusioned with the regime as it failed to check inflation—their real wages reduced to half as cost of living soared. All fixed-income groups, like civil servants, also faced the similar fate. Marginal and landless peasants as well as farm workers also did not benefit from the regime's policy of fixing landholding ceiling at 25 bighas (8.3 acres) per individual and 33.3 acres per family or abolition of land tax on landholding up to 8.3 acres, as they owned land only marginally or not at all.[4] Thus, overwhelming majority of the population was dissatisfied with the regime. Perhaps the darkest hour of the regime came when the country plunged into a devastating famine in 1974 taking

tolls of hundreds and thousands.

Table 6.10 Commitments and Disbursements of Grants and Credits to Bangladesh, 1971–75 (in million US$)

	1971/72			1972/73			1973/74			1974/75			Pipeline in July 1975
	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	A	B	C	
1. Grants													
A. Food aid	144.5	103.3	71.5	215.1	113.7	0.52	63	190	3.02	213.7	195.9	0.91	33.5
B. Nonproject aid	258.3	117.1	45.3	208.8	211.4	1.01	65.3	115.3	0.57	89.6	122.7	1.36	55.6
C. Project aid	97.7	—	—	40.8	20.8	0.51	22.1	58.1	2.62	58.4	62.1	1.27	68.1
Subtotal	500.5	220.4	44	464.7	345.8	0.74	150.3	363.3	2.44	363.3	396.6	1.07	157.2
2. Loans and credits													
A. Food aid	—	—	—	34.5	7.4	0.21	117.1	110.2	0.94	246.8	183.1	0.74	97.6
B. Nonproject aid	1.2	—	—	118.5	5.9	0.05	139.5	70.5	0.5	329.3	263.2	0.79	248.8
C. Project aid	89.1	6.9	0.07	354.9	61.5	0.17	180.2	95.9	0.53	355.6	80.8	0.23	734.7
Subtotal	90.3	6.9	0.08	507.9	74.8	0.15	436.8	276.7	0.63	931.7	527.1	0.57	1081.1
Total grants and loans	590.8	227.3	0.38	972.6	420.6	0.43	587.1	640	1.09	1299.4	923.7	0.71	1238.3

Source: Author's compilation from the Statistical Appendix of World Bank (1976).
Notes: A. Commitment. B. Disbursement. C. Commitment–disbursement ratio. Total grant figures of 1974/75 include cash commitment and disbursements.

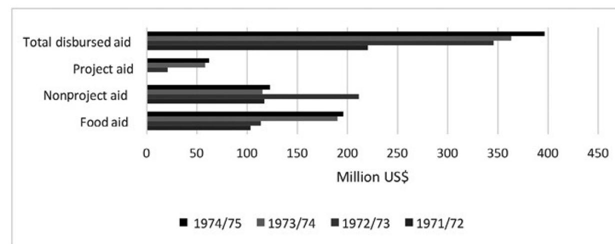


Figure 6.7 Total Disbursed Foreign Aid to Bangladesh, 1971/72–1974/75 (in million US$)

V. THE REGIME'S POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

Politically, however, the regime's performance was not so dismal, except for very few and far-reaching exceptions. The regime, to begin with, was headed by Sheikh Mujib who willingly surrendering himself to the Pakistani occupation forces on the fateful night of March 25–26 when military crackdown was lunched. Mujib thus voluntarily abdicated leadership of the guerrilla warfare, which eventually led to liberation of the country. Then, the liberation was achieved in a remarkably short period of time—just in nine months—by the Mukti Bahini, albeit with the military and political assistance from India, but in conspicuous absence of Mujib. The birth-pangs of liberation that the nation went through during the war, which affected the broad masses very profoundly, were beyond the comprehension of Mujib. Thus, by assuming the control of the newly liberated nation, Mujib took upon himself a responsibility, which was impossible for him to deliver.

Then, in postliberation Bangladesh, the regime confronted some extraordinary

challenges to establish governmental authority and restore law and order. It had to deal with the collaborators, disarm the freedom fighters, recast the nation's administrative machinery, return victorious Indian soldiers back home, deal with more than 90,000 Pakistani POWs, and run an international campaign for securing foreign aid and recognition. Also, it had to regain political legitimacy and restore political stability of the newborn nation. By any standards, the political and administrative challenges that the Mujib regime confronted in the immediate aftermath of the war were herculean. Mujib, however, had a distinct advantage, at least in the beginning; he was the undisputed, supreme leader of the country.

Taking into consideration of such constraints and advantages, this study evaluates the political performance of the regime on the basis of two sets of factors: (a) nation building and service delivery—how the regime was organized, how it operated, and how it delivered services and (b) interest articulation and interest aggregation—how the questions of political legitimacy and representation were addressed, how the opposition was dealt with, and how the external relations were handled.

Establishment of Governmental Authority

The Mujib regime switched to a parliamentary system, apparently bowing to the Awami League's long-standing position in this regard. Mujib was also uncomfortable with the position of titular head of state, as bestowed on him by the Mujibnagar government. He also brushed aside the idea of forming a national government. Instead, he formed his own government by drawing all of his cabinet members from the Awami League alone. There was also the issue of the lack of an electoral mandate. The party's claim to have played a leading role in the war can hardly be questioned, but it was hardly the case that it alone had fought the liberation war, or the success in the war automatically gave the party legitimate authority to form a postwar government by itself.

Mujib had another great disadvantage at the start—most of his cabinet members were relatively young and had little or no experience in running a government. The regime's delivery capacity was further constrained by lack of experienced administrative personnel. Only a handful of *Bangalee* officers had held senior positions prior to the liberation war. Moreover, the civil service was faction ridden, prone to corruption, and lacked neutral character. The governmental power remained essentially concentrated in the hands of Mujib himself—he was the towering figure, no other leader could approach his level of

personal charisma or authority. Also, during the first two years and the last year of the regime, the regime was subject to no parliamentary or judicial accountability. The cabinet was directly responsible to Mujib himself, and he was answerable to none.

Restoring Law and Order

Restoring law and order was a daunting task for the regime as sophisticated arms and ammunition were available to both those who had fought for liberation (the freedom fighters), and those who had opposed it (the collaborators). In the immediate aftermath of the war, lawlessness grew by leaps and bounds as some Mukti Bahini commanders installed themselves into small-time warlords. Some freedom fighters blamed Mujib for abdicating responsibility for leadership of the war, and accused several members of his cabinet of distancing themselves from military theaters. As a result, the regime largely failed in disarming freedom fighters, bringing collaborators to justice, and reconstituting law-enforcement agencies.

Reorganization of Administrative Machinery

Constrained by a pressing need for experienced civil servants, the regime reinstituted civil servants who switched their allegiance after the country's independence, while effectively shutting the door of the civil service on the face of the freedom fighters. As a result, factionalism and cleavages characterized the rank and file of the civil service—those who cooperated with Pakistani occupation forces were branded as collaborators, those who repatriated from West Pakistani captivity were branded as repatriates, and those who worked for the Mujibnagar government were exalted as Mujibnagar employees. Finally, the regime corroded morale of the civil servants by recklessly using the so-called Presidential Order 9, which allowed it to dismiss any civil servant at political will.

Framing of a New Constitution

Framing a constitution for the newly independent country will perhaps go down as a major achievement of the Mujib regime. The constitution came into force on December 16, 1972, coinciding with the first anniversary of the nation's Victory Day. The constitution, however, largely reflected what the ruling party wanted since there was no opposition in the parliament. The process of drafting it

involved little by the way of deliberation either within the parliament or outside it. The Constituent Assembly arguably lacked a legal mandate for undertaking the task. The fundamental principles adopted by the constitution soon became controversial. The principle of nationalism was criticized for failing to separate the *Bangalee*s of Bangladesh from the Bengali-speaking population of the Indian state of West Bengal, and to reflect the aspirations of the tribal populations of the country. Critics of the principle of socialism pointed out that neither Mujib nor the Awami League had the commitment or capability to establish socialism. The principle of secularism was interpreted by many, especially by devout Muslims and collaborators, as an attempt to appease the Hindu minority within the country and neighboring India.

Returning the Indian Troops

Returning the Indian troops back home within just three months of the country's liberation was indeed another great accomplishment on the part of the Mujib regime. The Indian army's heroic role was somewhat blemished as the Mukti Bahini or Mujibnagar government was not represented at the surrendering function of Pakistani soldiers at the Suhrawardy Uddayan on December 16, 1971, and by their alleged pillage of huge amount of Pakistani arms and ammunition. Then, Mujib's signing of the 25-year-friendship treaty with India for the sake of stability and security of the nation was seen by many as a ploy to keep Bangladesh dependent on the Indian military for its security, undermine Bangladesh's regular armed forces, and India's attempt to wipe out secessionist movements in its northeastern states.

Dealing with Pakistani POWs

The Mujib regime failed to live up to its promise when it came to handling of the Pakistani POWs. First of all, Pakistani soldiers, who surrendered on December 16, 1971, were immediately taken to India without the consent of the regime. Then the regime publicly committed itself to putting them on trial for genocide and other war crimes. In March, 1972, in the presence of the visiting Indian prime minister, Mujib declared that India would hand over the POWs to Bangladesh for the trial, but he failed to live up to this commitment. Then in April, 1973, the regime declared that it would pursue the trial of only 195 of the POWs against whom clear evidence of war crimes was established. Ultimately, none of the Pakistani POWs was brought to justice.

Securing International Recognition

Securing International Recognition

The regime succeeded in obtaining recognition from many nations as well as membership with key multilateral bodies relatively quickly. Neighboring India recognized Bangladesh before the country's liberation, and soon after the liberation, recognitions of the Soviet bloc and nonaligned countries followed. By mid-1973, the United States and other western countries extended recognition. The recognition of Saudi Arabia and other major Muslim nations, however, came in 1974, only after the regime abandoned its plans to hold trial of the Pakistani POWs. The recognition of China also came in 1974, which paved the way for the nation to obtain membership with the United Nations the same year.

Of course, when it comes to political measures, the regime's grandest failure lied with the formation of the Rakkhi Bahini, a well-funded and well-equipped paramilitary force personally loyal to Mujib himself, which was used ruthlessly and indiscriminately to suppress and oppress opposition, extralegal killings, and terrorizing masses. The Mujib regime was also ill-served by civil servants who faced "political screening" and "personal vendettas," on top of being ridden by internal strife stemming from their proliberation or antiliberation stances (Franda 1982b, 74). The mother of all the failures of the Mujib regime, however, lied with its move to one-party monolithic rule under BAKSAL, which not only wiped out last vestiges of democracy in the country, but also practically undid the regime itself. Next chapter sheds light on both of these issues in greater details.

NOTES

1. The regime's minister for interior, Mansoor Ali, claimed in the parliament that between January 1, 1972, and May 31, 1974, 9,560 people were murdered, including 250 leaders of the Awami League, and there were 13,224 acts of robbery and arsons. He also claimed that there were 69 political assassinations in the country in the first five months of 1974 (Tayeeb 1978, 170).

2. "It was our war—we fought it—we won it; we appreciate them all who helped us," Ziaur Rahman, who as an army major served in the liberation war in 1971, told reporters (Times of India, March 29, 1981).

3. As Thomas (1996) points out, although Indian military intervention helped create Bangladesh, the possibility that Hindu Bengali nationalism in West Bengal would also want to join this "Bengal Nation" must have worried Indian policymakers during the period of liberation war of Bangladesh.

4. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Mujib regime depended on rich and middle-class farmers for its survival; most of its parliamentary members came from this group. Only about 25 percent of landholdings in Bangladesh exceeded the ceilings of 25 bighas (8.3 acres), 55 percent had landholdings between 2.5 acres and 8.3 acres, and only 20 percent had less than 2.5 acres. The policies of the regime thus helped rich and middle-income peasants, not subsistence farmers and landless peasants or farm workers. See Khan (1974), Blair (1978), and Islam (1985).

Chapter 7

The Mujib Regime

Enduring Legacies and Controversies

I. INTRODUCTION

Not many, albeit with some degrees of conscience, would deny that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920–1975) was a great phenomenon in the entire history of Bangladesh. He was a legendary figure, who founded a new nation called Bangladesh, eventually materializing his people's perennial search for a distinct nationhood. Not many will question his iron determination and unwavering readiness to endure sufferings for the cause of self-determination and freedom of his nation. Not many will question that his voice had an electrifying effect on the freedom fighters who liberated the country from the Pakistani occupation forces in his conspicuous absence. But Mujib's role in the postliberation Bangladesh—the policies and programs that he pursued, especially the governance issues of his regime—remains highly controversial and continue to impact his legacy. It is thus not surprising that even after more than four decades of his brutal death, Mujib continues to be a formidable force in the nation's political developments and discourses.

This concluding chapter looks into some of the controversies and legacies of the Mujib regime that continue to affect contemporary developments and discourses of the country, such as (I) Mujib's voluntary surrender to Pakistani military on the night of March 25–26, 1971; (II) the declaration of independence in March, 1971; (III) the number of casualties of the liberation war; (IV) *Bangalee* versus Bangladeshi nationalism; (V) formation of the Rakkhi Bahini; (VI) move to one-party monolithic rule under BAKSAL; (VII) trial of the killers of Mujib and his family members under Hasina government; and (VIII) trial of the collaborators of the liberation war under Hasina government. Each of these issues is discussed below in this order. The chapter concludes with some final words about the Mujib regime.

II. MUJIB'S ARREST ON MARCH 26, 1971

Evidently, Mujib was at his Dhanmondi residence, waiting for his arrest, when General Osman Mitha, head of Pakistani Commandos of the Special Services Group (SSG) picked him up in the early hours of March 26, 1971. The commandos were under strict orders directly from Yahya Khan to take Mujib alive and treat him respectfully. Simon Dring, the only foreign correspondent in Dhaka who escaped forced departure to Karachi that night, contacted Mujib at around 1:00 a.m., just minutes before his arrest, Mujib told Dring that he was expecting an attack any minute and he had sent everyone, except his servants and bodyguards, away to safety.[1] One of the enduring questions ever since has been: Why did Mujib decide to abdicate the leadership of the liberation war? In other words, why did Mujib prefer to stay back and allow himself to be arrested by Pakistani authorities rather than fleeing the city and providing leadership to the rebels?

There are conflicting accounts to what happened next—some suggest that he was flown to West Pakistan the same night, some claim he was brought to West Pakistan several days later. Maniruzzaman (1988, 109), for example, claims that Mujib was flown to West Pakistan the same day. Some reports suggest that claims that Mujib was first taken to National Assembly building, and then to the cantonment where he was placed in the same room where he was detained during the Agartala Conspiracy Case, and was taken to West Pakistan a few days later (Dowlah 2009, 92–93). Khatib (1981, 118) maintains that after the arrest, Mujib was taken to the Adamjee School in the Dhaka Cantonment and the next morning, on March 26, “a bullet whizzed past him” when he was shifted to Flagstaff House in the cantonment, and three days later, flown to Karachi. Jacob (1998, 34), an Indian military general who played instrumental role in Bangladesh liberation war, also claims that Mujib was taken to West Pakistan a few days after his arrest. Raza (1997, 94), a close confidant of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, maintains that Mujib was flown to West Pakistan on April 5, 1971—after General Tikka Khan was sworn in as governor of East Pakistan.[2]

Scholars and observers differ widely in respect to possible motives of Mujib to get arrested by the Pakistani authorities. Ahmed (1979, 238), a close confidant of Mujib at that time, cites five plausible reasons for his “deliberate and calculated act” of surrendering to the Pakistani military. First, Mujib had neither the orientation nor philosophical urge to “engage himself in armed struggle against an organized army. His political and class background would not suggest that either.” Second, he failed to comprehend the magnitude of the impending military operation—he rather thought that after the initial arrests and killings the

Pakistani military junta would seek a political settlement.

Third, Mujib firmly believed that Pakistani army would not kill him—apparently he was assured by "a diplomat of a superpower."[3] Fourth, Mujib thought for him the door would remain open for "political re-settlement," and finally, he was "not so sure whether he wanted independence," and therefore, allowed himself to be led by events, "rather than himself leading the events." Ahmed maintains that of all the parties concerned, Mujib was the least willing to encourage armed revolt or violent extra-constitutional action to bring about the disintegration of Pakistan. Instead of declaring independence and joining the people in the war, Mujib rather called for a general strike on March 27 to protest against the Pakistani military assaults (Ahmed 1979, 247).

Immediately after his release from Pakistani prison, in an exclusive interview, British journalist David Frost[4] asked Mujib directly, "Why did you decide to stay and be arrested?" Mujib's response was: "That evening, my house was surrounded by commandos and they wanted to kill me if I came out of the house, giving the names of my own people and saying that Mujib Rahman has been killed by the extremists of Bangladesh." He also added that his escaping of arrest would provoke Pakistani military to "kill my whole people. They will make a massacre. I thought it is better I die and at least save my people who love me so much" (Singh *et al.* 1999, 615). Mujib's answer perhaps provides two clues: (a) that he had serious apprehension that Pakistan military would resort to massive killing and destruction of property had he escaped and (b) that his fleeing could give the Pakistani forces a chance to kill him and then shift the blame of his death onto somebody else.

Archer Blood (2002, 198), the controversial American consul general in Dhaka during those tumultuous days, maintains that Mujib expressed similar apprehensions when Abdur Razzak, chief of the volunteer corps of the Awami League, tried to prevail on him to leave his residence at 11 p.m. on March 25th. Mujib told Razzak that the blood of too many people would be shed. Muhith (1992, 235) also makes a similar argument that Mujib "refused to move out of his house lest infuriated soldiers destroy villages and kill thousands to find and arrest him."

Wazed Mian (2000, 78–84), son-in-law of Mujib, maintains that Mujib anticipated his immediate arrest or even murder by Pakistani military especially since his historic speech on March 7, 1971, at Suhrawardy Uddayan. Mian's accounts, however, suggest that on the night of March 25, Mujib had a plan to join top Awami League leaders—Tajuddin Ahmed, Captain Mansur Ali, Syed

Nazrul Islam, and A. H. M. Qumruzzaman—in Gingira—a nearby suburb of Dhaka—in order to flee to Chittagong. Throughout the evening of March 25, Mujib had consultations with his political comrades. He had talks with top student leaders—Sirajul Alam Khan, A. S. M. Abdur Rab, and Shahjahan Siraj —around 11 p.m. and another individual by the name Jhantu at around 11:30 p.m. It is after the talks with Jhantu, whose arrival he was anxiously awaiting, that Mujib asked his daughters Hasina and Rehana to immediately leave the residence with Wazed Mian. Sheikh Kamal left the house beforehand, while Sheikh Jamal, who apparently could not live without his mother, stayed back at the residence with Begum Mujib.

An academic observer of the events, Talukder Maniruzzman (1988, 110), agrees that Mujib might have been afraid of being killed while fleeing (either by Pakistani forces or by extremist students who were displeased with his extemporizing on the issue of independence), but maintains that Mujib might also have calculated at the same time that Pakistan's military crackdown would be temporary, and a massive movement like that of 1969 would force his release and he would eventually be able to "ride the crest of a new wave of popularity." An American scholar, Harry Blair (1971), took a similar position back in 1971.

Obviously, none of these explanations can conclusively or satisfactorily answer the question of why Muijb decided to stay back and allow himself to be arrested. His own answer (that he chose not to escape because he feared that Pakistani forces would have killed many innocent people in search of him) is also not quite adequate. This explanation could have been true only for the short run, only for the first few days after the military crackdown. Because the moment he had crossed the border or moved to a safer place, a simple announcement to that effect could have prevented such a massacre. Moreover, even his surrender did not prevent the Pakistani forces from launching one of the most barbaric armed attacks in modern history on unarmed civilians on the dark night of March 26.

The argument that, while fleeing he might have been killed by Pakistani forces and then blame could have been shifted to snipers, does not sound quite defensible as well. One needs to do the right thing at such a crucial juncture of history, irrespective of risks involved. Considering the fact that Mujib had plenty of time[5] to work out the right course of action, and that he had prepared himself for the arrest and even waited to be arrested while at the same time asking his followers to disperse, gives credence to those who argued that it was a conscious and calculated choice of Mujib himself. Questions do arise whether it was because he sought to end up as a popular leader but not a revolutionary? Ahmed

(1979, 238)[6]. Or, because of bitter experience in the past, he hesitated to take shelter in India or seek Indian assistance for the liberation of Bangladesh?

A more important question, however, should be how different would have been the outcome of the war had he not escaped and actually led the war. Although there can be no question that Mujib's active leadership of the war could have made a huge difference, the answer to the question must be hypothetical, and any number of scenarios could be perceived. To this author, the following seems quite feasible. First of all, his active leadership of the Bangladesh government-in-exile could have earned instant legitimacy throughout the world—after all, his party won landslide in the 1970 general election, the military crackdown by Pakistani forces on the unarmed civilians on the night of March 26 was already condemned globally as a genocide, and that Pakistani military was unwilling to surrender to the results of a general election was crystal clear. Second, had Mujib been the leader of the liberation war, global support to the Bangladesh war of liberation could be much more generous than what had been the case under the Mujibnagar government headed by Tajuddin, who was hardly a match to the charisma or stature of Mujib.

Third, Mujib would have succeeded "not only in dealing with divisive trends inside the leadership which had taken shelter in Calcutta, but also in maintaining some links with the Awami League and non-Awami League leaders who had stayed behind in Bangladesh" (Ali, 1994, 30). Most importantly, he could bring all non-Awami League parties under his leadership to fight for the liberation of the country, which Tajuddin failed to do. Fourth, active leadership of the war would have given Mujib the opportunity to shape the liberation war, to understand firsthand what had transpired and how the nation's mind-set was revolutionized during the war period, something turned out to be crucial for him when he assumed the helm of the nation after the war.

Fifth, had Mujib been at the helm of the liberation war, it could have been awfully difficult for the Pakistani military to continue their acts of aggression for as long as they did—international relations of Pakistan could have been a nightmare, the war period could have been much shorter, war casualties could have been much smaller, destruction and devastation of Bangladesh could have been less severe, mass exodus of East Pakistani refugees to India could have been far less, and most importantly, at the end of the war, Pakistani occupying forces could have surrendered to Mujib, to the Mukti Bahini, not to the Indian forces as turned out to be the case.

III. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

III. THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

The declaration of independence of Bangladesh has been one of the highly controversial and most widely debated issues in the political discourse of the country. In March, 1971, when ordinary people of all walks of life took up arms and joined the guerrilla forces for the liberation of their homeland, they did not care to know who declared the independence of the country. Nobody heard of any controversy over the issue of the declaration of independence even when the Mukti Bahini fought a valiant guerrilla warfare to liberate the country, or in the immediate aftermath of the liberation war.

But in the mid-1970s, after the assassination of Mujib in a blitzkrieg military coup and with the assumption of power by General Ziaur Rahman, fierce controversies flared up over the issue of the declaration of independence between the activists and adherents of the two principal political parties of the country—the Awami League, the party of Mujib, and the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), the party founded by Zia. Both parties began attributing sole credit for the declaration of independence to their respective founding leaders—the Awami League to Mujib and the BNP to Zia.[7]

According to the official documents of Bangladesh liberation war—the *Bangladesher Shawdhinata Juddher Dalilpatra*—Documents of Bangladesh Liberation War (GOB, 1982)—Mujib had declared the independence of Bangladesh immediately before his arrest in the early hours of March 26, 1971, and his declaration read as follows:

> This may be my last message, from today Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your fight must go on until the last soldier of Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh and final victory is achieved. (GOB 1982, Vol. III, 1)

Subsequently, the official Proclamation of Independence of Bangladesh, adopted by the Bangladesh government-in-exile (henceforth, Mujibnagar government) on April 17, 1971, acknowledged such a declaration of independence by Mujib (Singh *et al.* 1999, 281–282).

Then, the 15th Amendment to the constitution, passed by the Sheikh Hasina government of Bangladesh in 2011, incorporated both the Declaration of Independence by Mujib and the Proclamation of Independence by the Mujibnagar government as integral parts of Bangladesh constitution (GOB 2015). Apparently, the objective of the Hasina government was to bring an end to the controversy over Mujib's declaration of independence, but the controversy still rages on. While the Awami League, and the scholars and observers who

adhere to the party's claims, believe it was Mujib who declared the country's independence; political activists as well as scholars and observers who adhere to the BNP still claim that the proper credit of declaring independence belonged to Zia instead.

Pro-Awami League Narratives

The position of the pro-Awami League scholars and activists has brewed controversy over the years mainly because there are just too many narratives, and some of those are obviously conflicting in nature and content. According to one narrative, immediately before his arrest, Mujib managed to send a wireless message of the declaration of independence to M. R. Siddiqui, the Chittagong district unit chief of the Awami League. Apparently, the message was received by a Chittagong-based newspaper, which was then made available to Siddiqui the next morning. As the message was written in English, it was translated into *Bangla* by a Chittagong University professor named Abu Jafar, and then it was broadcasted from the Kalurghat relay station of Chittagong, by then renamed as Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra (Radio Station of Independent Bangladesh), by M. A. Hannan, secretary of the Chittagong district unit Awami League.[8]

A second narrative suggests that Mujib's wireless message was sent to the headquarters of East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) in Chittagong, which was received by an EPR captain named Rafiqul Islam, who then brought it to the attention of prominent Awami League leaders of Chittagong, such as M. A. Hannan, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, and M. R. Siddiqui. A *Bangla* draft was then prepared by these leaders and then M. A. Hannan read out the declaration on behalf of Mujib from the Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kenrda at around 2:30 p.m. on March 26. Remarkably, both the first and second narratives had the same set of persons involved in translating and broadcasting the message, but not the same source for originally receiving the message from Mujib.

A third narrative suggests that Mujib had his declaration of independence taped in his own voice immediately before his arrest in the early hours of March 26 and made arrangements for transmitting it to the leaders of Chittagong Awami League, namely Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury and M. A. Hannan through the EPR transmitter from Balda Garden (Dhaka). This version authored by Wazed Mian, late husband of Sheikh Hasina, also claims that after transmitting the message, a designated EPR personnel called back Mujib for further instructions, when Mujib ordered him to throw the transmitter into waters and leave the spot immediately. Mian also claims that it was during the course of these

conversations that the Pakistani army entered Mujib's residence to arrest him (Mian 2000, 88–89). If this version is true, than the EPR captain Rafiqul Islam must have received a recorded tape of Mujib's declaration, not a written message. Islam (1981, 98) claims that after receiving message (not a tape), he "talked over telephone with Mr. Hannan, Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury, and M. R. Siddiqui, and requested that there should be some radio announcement about our fighting the enemy in the city of Chittagong. Accordingly, a draft was prepared by the Awami League leaders and finalized by Dr. Zafar. The broadcast appealed to all countries of the world to save the Bangalees from the Pakistani Army. It asked the Bangalees to fight the enemy with whatever means they had."

A fourth narrative, claimed by Muhith (1992, 260–61), has it that the Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra broadcasted the Declaration of Independence at 7:30 p.m. on March 26 from a cyclostyled statement attributed to Mujib and one Abul Kashem Sandwip of Chittagong Radio station read it out. A fifth version, claimed by Khan (1996, 108–109), has it that some *Bangalee* army officers got hold of Mujib's message at Chittagong Radio Station and then drafted the declaration of independence on March 26 with the help of some Awami League leaders. Then they asked Major Ziaur Rahman, a *Bangalee* military officer who was then second-in-command of the eighth battalion of the East Bengal Regiment (EBR) stationed at Chittagong cantonment, to read out the declaration. Accordingly, Major Zia read out the declaration of independence over the Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra on behalf of Mujib on March 27.[9]

Still another version is given by Sheikh Hasina (2012, xxiv), eldest daughter of Mujib, who narrates Mujib's declaration as follows:

> Moments after the crackdown began, Mujib declared independence at 12:30 a.m. 26 March. His declaration was transmitted through wireless to every place in the country. He said, "This may be my last message; from this day onward Bangladesh is independent. I call upon the people of Bangladesh wherever you might be and with whatever you have, to resist the army of occupation to the last. Your struggle must go on until the last soldier of Pakistan occupation army is expelled from the soil of Bangladesh. Final victory is ours.

Hasina (2012, xxiv) also claims that Mujib sent another message in Bengali at the same time. The message read as follows:

> The Pakistani army has suddenly attacked Philkhana EPR Headquarters, Rajarbagh Police Line. Skirmishes are going on all over the streets of the city. I am calling for help to the nations of the world. Our freedom fighters are fighting valiantly against the enemy to liberate our motherland. In the name of Almighty God I order and call upon you to liberate our country. Fight even if you have one drop of blood in you. Ask for help from the police, EPR, Bengal Regiment and Ansars. Ask them to fight side by side with you. Any question of compromise does not arise. Victory will be ours. Drive out the last soldier of the enemy from our sacred land. Pass this message to all Awami League leaders, workers, and

all compatriots. God bless you, Joy Bangla.

Hasina thus claims that there were two messages from Mujib—one in English and the other in *Bangla*, and these versions were different from each other. According to her, both messages were "immediately disseminated throughout the country under special arrangements." She, however, does not explain the nature of special arrangements or how the message was disseminated throughout the country. In case the message was broadcasted from the Kalurghat radio station, the station had only 10 kilowatt transmitter that could effectively cover only about 60 miles around Chittagong—people in other areas of the country would not be able to receive any transmission from this station. Moreover, unlike her husband, she does not claim that Mujib's messages were sent to Chittagong through wireless transmitter. Her claim of the English version of the declaration, however, comes close to the version available in official documents of the liberation war, but they are not the same.

The several narratives described above thus suggest that there had been several recipients of Mujib's purported wireless messages—a newspaper, an EPR captain, Awami League leaders Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury and M. A. Hannan, M. R. Siddiqui, and so on. The narratives also suggest that Mujib's messages were apparently read out from Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra by several individuals, such as M. A. Hannan, Abul Kashem Sandwip, and Major Zia. More importantly, several messages attributed to Mujib differed from narrator to narrator.

Pro-BNP Narratives

The narratives backed by the BNP and the scholars and observers who adhere to the party give the credit for the declaration of independence squarely to Major Zia. They claim that Zia declared the independence on March 27, 1971, over Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra when most of the top Awami League leaders were either crossing the borders to India or went into hiding fearing arrests by the Pakistani forces. Exponents of this line of argument also maintain that Zia in fact declared independence twice—on March 27 and on March 30. In his first declaration, Zia declared himself as the president of Bangladesh, and in his second declaration he made the clarification that he had declared the independence on behalf of Mujib.[10] The official document of Bangladesh liberation war puts Zia's declaration of independence as follows:

Major Zia, Provisional Commander-in-Chief of the Bangladesh Liberation Army, hereby proclaims, on

behalf of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the independence of Bangladesh. I also declare, we have already formed a sovereign, legal government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman which pledges to function as per law and the constitution. The new democratic government is committed to a policy of nonalignment in international relations. It will seek friendship with all nations and strive for international peace. I appeal to all governments to mobilize public opinion in their respective countries against the brutal genocide in Bangladesh. The government under Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is sovereign legal government of Bangladesh and is entitled to recognition from all democratic nations of the world. (GOB 1982, Vol. III, 3)

Obviously, the declaration of independence read out by Zia had no similarity with the purported message that was attributed to Mujib. The pro-BNP exponents thus argue that no formal declaration of independence was written, recorded, or declared by Mujib—it was rather an attempt by the Awami League to “cover the fact that Sheikh Mujib instead of making a declaration and joining the people, decided to give in to Pakistan army in order to achieve a negotiated settlement” (Ahmed 1979, 247). Some observers point out that as the Chittagong Radio Station as well as all EPR wireless channels were under effective control of Pakistani forces by March 25, there was no or little scopes for any non-*Bangalee* officer of receiving Mujib’s purported message, and thus the so-called message from Mujib is a “phony and fake one manufactured and passed on by some well-meaning and desperate individuals in Chittagong wanting to do something in that critical situation” (Umar, 2004).

Available evidence suggest that immediately before the military crackdown in Dhaka, scores of top Pakistani generals visited Chittagong cantonment and held series of meetings in the cantonment, but all such meeting excluded *Bangalee* officers (Maniruzzaman 1988). It seems highly unlikely that given such a level of tension and distrust, hawkish Pakistani generals would leave any wireless station of EPR under the control of *Bangalee* officers. Also apparently all telecommunication links between Dhaka and Chittagong were snapped by 7 p.m. on March 25—M. R. Siddiqui himself acknowledged that he failed to contact Mujib repeatedly that evening as telephone lines were snapped (Dowlah 2009, 368). As all communications were cut off by early evening, the claim that someone had received a wireless message from Mujib at midnight seems highly incredible. Even EPR captain Islam, who supposedly received Mujib’s messages, did not claim so in his own narrative of the events (Islam 1981, 98). Ziaur Rahman himself questioned, back in 1973, “How could I get direction from Sheikh Mujib when he was already taken in by Pakistani military and we were fighting for own survival against heavy odds” (Khan 1996, 109).

Then, the declaration of independence, which was read out by Hannan, did not

mention that the statement came from Mujib. Also, the message that was read out by Hannan and the one attributed to Mujib are not the same. Hannan read out the following message:

> Today Bangladesh is a sovereign and independent country. On Thursday night West Pakistani armed forces suddenly attacked the police barracks at Razarbagh and the EPR headquarters at Pilkhana in Dhaka. Many innocent and unarmed have been killed in Dhaka city and other places of Bangladesh. Violent clashes between EPR and Police on the one hand and the armed forces of Pindi on the other, are going on. The Bangalees are fighting the enemy with great courage for an independent Bangladesh. May God aid us in our fight for freedom. Joy Bangla. (Copied from Wikipedia)

Moreover, the narrative of routing of such an important message—like the declaration of independence—through Chittagong makes little sense as it could be easily broadcasted or telecasted directly from Dhaka had Mujib wished to do so (Umar 2004). The radio and television stations of Dhaka were under effective control of the Awami League since early March. Even in the words of Mujib’s daughter Sheikh Hasina (2012, xxiii–xxiv), “The entire nation carried out Mujib’s instructions. Every organization, including government offices, courts, banks, insurance companies, schools, colleges, mills and factories obeyed his orders. … In reality, he ruled an independent Bangladesh from 7 March to 25 March.” Pakistani army reestablished their control over radio and television stations in Bangladesh only after 11 p.m. on March 25, coinciding with the military crackdown. Also, Mujib evidently anticipated a military crackdown as early as March 24, when his team was still negotiating with the Yahya team, when he asked many of his top aides to leave Dhaka as soon as possible (Dowlah 2009, 101–102).

Available evidence also suggest that in the evening of March 25, until 10:30 p.m., Mujib had met and talked over telephone with scores of party men as well as many journalists from home and abroad. Many prominent leaders of his party, including Kamal Hossain and Amirul Islam, two of his top associates, left his residence at around 10 p.m. It is unrealistic to believe that none of them would be aware of, or given a copy of the message of the declaration of independence. Then the Pakistani government (GOP 1971), in its *White Paper on the Crisis of East Pakistan*, accused Mujib of plotting “ a conspiracy with India an uprising that was to take East Bengal out of the Republic of Pakistan” (Blair 1971, 2555), but it did not accuse Mujib of declaring independence. It is inconceivable that the military junta would leave aside such a crucial piece of evidence in support of its case.

It thus seems clear that Mujib’s historic address on March 7, 1971, at the

Suhrawardy Uddayan came very close to declaring independence of Bangladesh. In this address Mujib did make a veiled call for independence (*Ebarer Sangram Sawdhinater sngram*) and he had clearly asked all *Bangalee*s to turn each and every home into a fortress against foreign occupation. Mujib himself apprehended that he might be arrested or killed by Pakistani forces for making such a declaration (Ahmed 1979). Immediately after the country's liberation, when David Frost asked Mujib why he refrained himself from declaring independence outright on March 7, 1971, his response was: "I didn't want to do it that day (March 7, 1971) particularly because I didn't want to allow them (West Pakistanis) to tell the world that Mujibur Rahman has declared independence and we have no alternative but to hit back. I wanted them to hit us first and my people were ready to resist it" (Singh *et al.* 2002, 623).

It is also clear that M. A. Hannan, an Awami League leader of Chittagong, did broadcast a declaration of independence on March 26 from the Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, and Major Zia made two declarations of independence from the same radio station on March 27 and 30. Although none of these messages was the same to what had been attributed to the purported wireless messages received from Mujib, the declarations from the clandestine radio station called Shwadhin Bangla Betar Kendra on March 26–30, 1971, were picked up by media outlets and governments around the world, and such declarations were globally acknowledged as the Awami League's declaration of independence from Pakistan.

It is also clear that the messages that Hannan and Zia read out from the Shwadhin Bangla Beter Kendra could not be translation from the same message. Moreover, it defies common sense that Mujib had asked his countrymen to fight for independence while he preferred the personal physical safety of prison for himself. It is thus not surprising that the issue of the declaration of independence still remains highly controversial.

IV. THE CASUALTIES OF THE LIBERATION WAR

Another great controversy that still hunts the political discourse in Bangladesh stems from Mujib's off-the-cup declaration at the Suhrawardy Uddayan on the occasion of his homecoming on January 10, 1972, that the liberation war cost the nation about three-and-a-half million lives. "Thanking his people for their 'incredible support', he [Mujib] claimed that three-and-a-half million people had been killed" (*Daily Telegraph* January 11, 1972). If Mujib's claim were true,

then the number of people killed in the liberation war of the country that lasted just nine months would exceed the casualty count of the Vietnam War, which was definitively more vicious, lasted more than lasted more than two decades and cost around three million lives. One of the sector commanders of the liberation war, retired colonel Nuruzzaman, argued that if the number of three million deaths was to be taken as true, then there had been 11,111 fatalities per day during the war, but nobody saw such a scale of massacre in Bangladesh at that time (*Holiday* February 15, 2002).

Even in December, 1971, the Mujibnagar government had placed fatalities of the war at around one million, including all *Bangalee*s, Biharis, and West Pakistanis (Ali 1994, 109; Dowlah 2009, 126). The *Time* magazine, in its October 25, 1971, issue, placed the number of casualties of the "seven-month old civil war" in Pakistan at around one million. Similarly, other major international newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, the *Guardian*, and *Le Monde,* all quoted the death figures at around one million. Subsequently, in 1976 the *Journal of Population Studies* estimated the death toll of the war at 500,000, and an article in the *British Medical Journal* in 2008 placed the number of violent deaths in the war at 269,000 (Bergman 2016).

Apparently Mujib picked up the number of 3 million from the Soviet *Pravda*, which cited the figure in its January 3, 1972, issue (Chowdhury 1972, 22; Maniruzzaman 1988, 233; Karim 2005). Alternatively, the number might have come from Indian intelligence officials, who briefed Mujib during his brief stopover in New Delhi on his way back from Pakistani jail (Ziring 1994, 83). Obviously, the figure of three million deaths is not based on any official investigation—it was humanly impossible to come up with an accurate figure when Mujib returned to Dhaka. There had, however, been a survey during the Mujib regime that projected the death toll of the war at 250,000, but the regime quickly abandoned the survey (Lifschultz 1974).

Unfortunately, no genuine effort was ever made in the country's history to establish accurate figures of the fatalities of the liberation war. Worse still, under the current government of Sheikh Hasina, Mujib's daughter, any question about the accuracy of the three million figure of the war casualties has been considered prosecutable offense, and such questioners are openly branded as pro-Pakistani or antiliberation elements (Bergman, 2016). Recently, an international journalist was prosecuted and a sedition case was filed against the chief of the main opposition party—Khaleda Zia—for raising questions about the accuracy of the war casualties of the liberation war (*Daily Star* January 25, 2016). Worse still,

the Bangladesh Law Commission, an official government entity, is reportedly preparing a draft law called the Liberation War Denial Crimes Act, which, if enacted into a legislation, would criminalize any statement aimed at undermining official accounts related to the liberation war (*Daily Star* March 23, 2016).[11]

V. *BANGALEE* VERSUS BANGLADESHI NATIONALISM

A new nation-state called Bangladesh emerged on world map on December 16, 1971, following a remarkably successful secessionist war, making it perhaps the first instance of secessionist movements to attain independence among independent states that emerged from the womb of former colonies.[12] The new nation-state also signified a climax for the perennial search of the people for a distinct nationhood—they finally secured an independent geopolitical territory to cherish and foster their own brand of nationalism. But the people's triumphant achievement soon bogged down to lingering controversies ever since the 1972 constitution, framed by the Mujib regime, described the nation as *Bangalee*. First of all, such a linguistic nationalism ignores the fact that the people of neighboring West Bengal also spoke Bengali and shared almost the same culture for hundreds of years, and there exists no intellectual basis for not excluding them from a nationhood that is based on Bengali language and culture, except that they live in a separate territory and believe in a different religion.

Apparently, prior to the liberation of the country, Mujib could not adopt *Bangalee* nationalism on the basis of language and culture, because it would logically lead "either to incorporation in India or cooperation with secessionist revolution in West Bengal and elsewhere against India" (Oren 1976, 21). Then, the ideological foundation of the new nationalism also suffered ambiguities in reference to scores of other issues, such as ethnic Bengal, historic Bengal, the national territory of Bengali Muslims, Lord Curzon's division of Bengal in 1905, Redcliff's division of Bengal in 1947, *Bangalee* identity versus *Bangalee* Muslim Bengal identity, and so on (Costanzo 2004). Also, the new concept of Bangladesh constitution on the basis of its own language and culture could not dispel the concept of a united Bengal that must have occurred to some Bengali nationalists on either side in East Pakistan and West Bengal during the liberation war in 1971 (Thomas 1996).

Second, the principle of *Bangalee* nationalism also does not bode well with the country's indigenous population—there are several tribes in the country, and one

of those constitutes about one percent of the nation's population but occupies one-tenth of the country's resourceful geographic territory in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Historically, the tribes of CHT had been self-sufficient communities with their own dialects and traditions, and never assimilated themselves with *Bangla* language or culture.[13] Third, the constitutional principle of *Bangalee* nationalism also does not bode well with the country's small refugee population—known as Biharis. These Urdu-speaking Muslims migrated to the land following the partition of Pakistan in 1947, primarily from the Indian state of Bihar. Linguistic affinity with West Pakistan helped them to thrive during the Pakistani period—when they occupied coveted government positions and dominated trade and business. During the liberation war, they took the side with Pakistan and they never embraced the *Bangalee* nationality.

In the midst of such controversies that critically eroded the new nationhood's ability to emerge as a culturally stable and politically viable vehicle for realizing nationalistic aspirations of the people, General Ziaur Rahman (1975–81) appeared on the political spectrum following the assassination of Mujib. Of the three political crosscurrents that persisted during the Mujib regime—the far right (Islamist parties), the left (socialist parties), and the centrist Awami League—the Zia regime drew supports from the first two. In order to appease the far right who opposed the constitutional principle of *Bangalee* nationalism, in 1977, Zia changed the nationalism of the people from *Bangalee* to "Bangladeshi."

Zia also changed the principle of secularism by allowing religion-based politics and reinstating Islamic parties, previously banned by the Mujib regime. While Mujib "missed a golden opportunity" to consolidate "his own brand of nationalism" after the independence, Zia sought to consolidate his concept of Bangladeshi nationalism by accommodating not only *Bangalee*s, but also non-Bengali-speaking Biharis and the tribal population. He also provided series of symbols to unify the country around "the identity and integrity of Bangladesh as a nation-state independent of India," while not pursuing xenophobic nationalism (Franda 1981, 375). The Fifth Amendment incorporated Zia's concept of Bangladeshi nationalism in Bangladesh constitution in April, 1979.

Then the Sheikh Hasina government in 2011 enacted the 15th Amendment to the constitution reverting the nationhood back to *Bangalee*. The Amendment actually adopted dual identity for the people—it describes the people of Bangladesh as *Bangalee*s and the citizens of the country as Bangladeshis. The amendment also restored the concept of secularism as adopted in the 1972 constitution, discarding the Fifth Amendment. Such contrasting interpretations

of the state principles of nationalism and secularism by Mujib and Zia—two of the most prominent leaders of the country—profoundly affected the nation's political discourses ever since. While Mujib's *Bangalee* nationalism came to be associated with secularism, Zia's Bangladeshi nationalism came to be associated with an affinity to Islamic religion. While Zia's Bangladeshi nationalism boosts anti-Indian sentiments, Mujib's *Bangalee* nationalism breads pro-Indian sentiments (Dowlah 2009, 7–14).

Obviously, such a vibrant controversy thrives on many deeply rooted factors and forces that historically conditioned the evolution of the nation. Some of the landmark events of such a historic evolution can be surmised as follows: (a) the division and reunification of Bengal in 1905–11 period, which raised and then quickly dashed, the hope for a distinct geopolitical identity of *Bangalee*-Muslims of East Bengal, separate from the nationhood of *Bangalee*-Hindus of West Bengal; (b) the Lahore Resolution of 1940 that raised the nostalgia for Greater Bengal (unification and the East and West Bengal) and the Pakistan Resolution of 1946 that effectively extinguished that dream; (c) the 1947 Partition of India, which merged East Bengal with Pakistan under a religion-based nationalism, and merged the *Bangalee*-Hindus of West Bengal with India; (d) the Liberation War of 1971 that caused disintegration of Pakistan as well as repudiation of the religion-based nationalism; and (e) the Mujib regime (1972–75), which adopted the principle of secularism and *Bangalee* nationhood in the original constitution, and the Zia regime (1976–81), which amended the constitution redefining nationalism to "Bangladeshi" and secularism to allow religion-based politics.

Obviously, those who embrace the *Bangalee* nationalism tend to draw inspirations from the reunification of Bengal (1911), the Lahore Resolution (1940), the disintegration of Pakistan (1971), and the Mujib regime (1972–75). On the other hand, those who take sides with the Bangladeshi nationalism draw inspirations from the Division of Bengal (1905), the Pakistan Resolution (1946), the merger of East Bengal with Pakistan (1947), and the Zia regime (1975–81). In the postliberation Bangladesh, these forces often clashed head-on. The two major political parties of the country—the Awami League, which led the liberation war, and the BNP, which provided anti-thesis to the Awami League—drew their support predominantly along those fault lines. Pro-Awami League elements tend to embrace *Bangalee* nationhood, while pro-BNP elements stand for Bangladeshi nationhood.

Almost all nationalisms—no matter theoretical constructs, empirical entities, or movements of self-determination—are controversial; the nationhood of the

people of Bangladesh is not an exception. But to construct a nationhood to the level of fostering national cohesion and political maturity, a nationhood must not only stand apart from other nations around the world, it should also be recognizably distinguished itself from its close neighbors, who might share similar ethnic and linguistic roots and sociocultural and religious mores. The nationhood of the people of Bangladesh is distinct from the religion-based nationalism of Pakistan from whose womb it has emerged—it does not subscribe to pan-Islamic identity or Islamic fundamentalism. It is also different from the romantic vision of nationalism of Greater Bengal as espoused by the Lahore Resolution of 1940—it does not aspire to embrace *Bangalee*-Hindus of West Bengal. On the other hand, the *Bangalee*-Hindus of West Bengal also may prefer to live under Hindu-majority India rather than Muslim-majority Bangladesh (Thomas, 1996). But the nationhood of Bangladesh has so far failed to redefine its language-based nationalism by making *Bangla* language a component, not a defining characteristic. The controversy, thus, still lingers on.

VI. ATROCITIES OF THE RAKKHI BAHINI

There can be no doubt that the Mujib regime confronted monumental challenges in restoring and maintaining law and order in the postliberation Bangladesh as numerous recalcitrant freedom fighters had superior military training and weapons than the law-enforcing agencies, and many of them refused to surrender arms or submit to the governmental authorities. But instead of reforming the existing law enforcement agencies—the police and the BDR—in February 1972, the regime floated a new paramilitary force called the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini for assisting the civil authorities in the maintenance of internal security.[14]

Formed under watchful eyes of the Indian military, equipped with modern weapons and robust budgetary supports,[15] the Rakkhi Bahini worked directly under the command of Mujib and his close confidants, and the members of the force took oaths of personal loyalty to Mujib. The Rakkhi Bahini, which "served as a parallel and rival group" of regular military (Baxter 1982, 75), was initially deployed to curb smuggling, illegal hoarding, recover illegal arms, as well as fighting against the left-leaning fighters in the northern parts of the country and the tribal insurgency in the CHT, but then the force was directed mainly to crash political opposition (Ahmed 1991, 65; Dowlah 2009, 148–150).

The Bahini enjoyed complete immunity from scrutiny by courts and it had no rules of business, nor was it required to follow legal procedures in arresting or

torturing people, or search or seizure of properties (Ahmed 1991, 63).[16] Due to unbridled atrocities and excesses committed by the Bahini, soon it was widely dubbed as the private army of Mujib and the Awami League. Mascarenhas (1986, 37) compared the Bahini with German Gestapo describing it as “bully boys not far removed from the Nazi Brown Shirts.” Ziring (1994, 98) accused the Rakkhi Bahini of roaming “the countryside, looting the poor villagers and committing bodily harm on those resisting their demands.”

The exact magnitude of the killings and tortures committed by the Bahini will never be known. The JSD, which succeeded in mounting formidable opposition to the Awami League in the immediate after the war, put the number of killings and arrests of its supporters at 60,000 and 80,000, respectively, during the first two years of the regime (*Bangladesh Observer* July 19, 1973). The Amnesty International (1974) accused the Bahini of detaining the editors of *Nayajug* and *Ganakantha*, as well as thousands of JSD supporters and leaders, including Abdur Rab and M. A. Jalil. In May, 2002, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, home minister of the BNP-led government, maintained that some 30,000 political workers and leaders who opposed the Awami League were killed by the Rakkhi Bahini during 1972–75 (*Daily Star* May 10, 2002).

A recent recount of the Rakkhi Bahini, written by a former deputy chief of the paramilitary force, claims that although the Bahini could not be absolved of any wrong doing, history has treated the Bahini harshly by attributing many of the excesses that took place during the Mujib regime, especially in respect to the treatment of the opposition and radical left (Alam 2014). But the universal bad name the Rakkhi Bahini had earned during the Mujib regime can hardly be erased from the collective memory of the nation. Also, at the end, the formation of Rakkhi Bahini did not bode well for the Mujib regime itself. The Rakkhi Bahini was “equipped and trained by the Indian army,” with the objective to “reduce the influence of the Pakistani trained Bangalee armed forces,” but one chief reason behind the bloody overthrow of Mujib regime was “his policy to neutralize the army’s political power through the establishment of a domestic security force (Rakkhi Bahini)” (Khan 1976, 115–123).

VI. ONE-PARTY RULE UNDER BAKSAL

No other legacy of the Mujib regime can be more haunting than the ominous move to a one-party rule under what is called the BAKSAL. Alarmingly deteriorating economic and political condition as well as law and order situation

in the country forced Mujib to declare emergency rule in December, 1974, under which fundamental rights of citizens to express mind, or assemble or protest against governmental policies, were banned. Then, on January 7, 1975, Mujib launched BAKSAL with a call to the nation to join his "Second Revolution" in order to establish a socialist economic and administrative order. Apparently, Mujib sought to "mobilize the Bangalees again, not against external enemies but against internal enemies—corrupt officials, black marketeers, smugglers and perpetrators of political violence" (Khan 1976, 122).

The BAKSAL came with a constitutional amendment—the Fourth Amendment—that brought the country's politics, administration, legislature, and judiciary—all branches of the government—under the totalitarian rule of one man—Mujib himself. Then the new party was essentially a new name for the old party—literally old wine in a new bottle. The entire power structure of BAKSAL was solidly in control of the party and Mujib's family members. Of the five secretaries of BAKSAL, one was Mujib's nephew, and of the five front organizations of BAKSAL—one was headed by Mujib's another nephew. All members of the BAKSAL's 15-member executive committee were inducted from the Awami League. An overwhelming majority of BAKSAL's 115-member central committee also came from the rank and file of the same party. Mujib, of course, was the penultimate life-time chief of the party and the president of the country without any term limits. The country's parliament rubber-stamped BAKSAL with overwhelming majority, without any discussion, and just in a matter of less than an hour.

By moving to BAKSAL, Mujib threw away the 1972 constitution out of the window by reducing the country into a personal kingdom. All vestiges of democracy and rule of law vanished in thin air instantaneously—there was no guarantee of human rights, no due process of law, no freedom of criticism of political or administrative excesses, no room for opposition to government, and no realistic means existed to change the government. The whole country was effectively placed under one-man rule. The president, not accountable to the parliament or the people, had the power to veto any legislation passed by the parliament unconditionally.

The cabinet, appointed by the president, was accountable to Mujib alone and he had the power to appoint and remove the judges of the highest courts of the country. The country's central administrative apparatus was brought under his direct control, and local administration was to be controlled by the district governors picked up by him. All newspapers except the selected four were

banned, and the state-run newspapers and radio and television stations carried the same propaganda.

With the assassination of Mujib by a military coup in mid-August, 1975, obviously the BAKSAL came to an abrupt end. Subsequently, Ziaur Rahman who assumed presidency of the country in April, 1977, with the interregnum of Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, restored political parties, reintroduced multiparty election, and held parliamentary election on January 27, 1979. The new parliament, in its first meeting on April 5, 1979, passed the Fifth Amendment to the constitution invalidating the Fourth Amendment, and validating all political and constitutional measures undertaken under Zia's martial law. The next day, on April 6, 1979, martial law was withdrawn as the country returned to democracy once again.

Thus, a political leader who fought for democracy most of his political life ended up killing the last vestiges of it when it came to deliver it on his own, while the burden of restoring democratic rights in a besieged country fell on to a military strongman who came to power through martial law. The controversy, however, continues as the Awami League and its supporters oppose the political and constitutional measures validated by the Fifth Amendment to the constitution, while the BNP and its supporters condemn the Mujib regime and the Awami League for killing democracy under one-party one-man rule of BAKSAL.

VII. TRIAL OF MUJIB'S KILLERS

Apparently, there was no dearth of reasons for the country's regular armed forces to be extremely unhappy with the Mujib regime. Many of them believed that the regime failed to acknowledge their heroic contribution to the liberation war and developed the Rakhhi Bahini as a parallel force to undermine them. Many also viewed the Indo-Bangladesh Friendship Treaty of 1972 as a sign of the regime's dependence on India for national security. Then there was considerable consternation in the armed forces about the induction of Mujib's son Sheikh Jamal into the military—many saw it as a move to put him on top of military, the same way as some of Mujib's nephews came to occupy key positions of the BAKSAL. On top of that, the regime irritated the armed forces by squeezing budgetary allocations for the military year after year.

The military coup that killed Mujib on August 15, 1975, was, however, orchestrated by a small group of disgruntled mid-ranking army officers, and the

masterminds of the coup were personally disgruntled with Mujib. Three Majors—Shafiqur Rahman Dalim, S. J. Noor, and M. Shahriar—were repelled by Mujib as they implicated several ruling party leaders—including a member of parliament and Mujib's brother, Sheikh Naser—during the military crackdown on the hoarders and smugglers in 1974. Apparently, instead of punishing the culprits, Mujib dismissed these officers. Eventually, the military coup orchestrated by these disgruntled officers led to the death of Mujib and most of his family members.

Within hours of the coup, Khandker Mushtaque Ahmed, who took over the presidency of the country, granted immunity to the killers of Mujib. But in 1997, 21 years after Mujib's assassination, when Sheikh Hasina, Mujib's eldest daughter who survived the onslaught on her family in 1975 became the prime minister of the country, the coup leaders were brought to justice. A court on November 8, 1998, sentenced all fifteen accused ex-army personnel to death. Subsequently, on May 1, 2001, the country's higher courts upheld death sentences of twelve convicts and acquitted the others. As discussed before, five of those convicted, who were in government custody, were hanged on January 28, 2010.

The trial of only the mid-ranking military officers for the killing of a towering figure like Mujib in a military coup raised many questions over the years. First of all, many wonder how such a blitzkrieg coup could take place without the help from other quarters from within and outside the country. Although Mujib was very unpopular and his regime failed in numerous ways, a Bangladesh without Mujib was still difficult to comprehend. Many believed it was an act of the CIA—they argued that Mujib might have annoyed the United States by introducing one-party rule at the instigation of pro-Moscow political elements in the country.

At the same time, some argued that a towering personality like Mujib was a threat to neighboring India as a prosperous independent state across its borders might reinforce secessionist movements among insurgency-ridden north-eastern states of India. They also argued that India was extremely worried about Mujib's personal popularity in the state of West Bengal and that a successful former East Bengal might entice the people of West Bengal to join Bangladesh. It was also argued that Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi apparently felt betrayed when Mujib joined the Islamic Summit in 1973 without consulting her in advance.

Then, almost all top-ranking members of the Awami League switched their allegiance to Mushtaque government within hours of Mujib's death. The

Mushtaque government was thus an Awami League government minus Mujib. Moreover, there were no protests, resentments, or demonstrations against the killing of Mujib and most of his family members. Such a wholesale alignment with Mushtaque government by most of the Awami League workers and leaders raised eyebrows about their role in the coup for which only Mushtaque and Taheruddin Thakur took the full brunt.[17] The controversy on the issue, thus, still lingers on.

VIII. TRIAL OF THE COLLABORATORS

Trial of those who opposed the liberation war and associated themselves with the Pakistani occupation forces—the so-called Razakars, Al-Badrs, Al-Shams, and Shanti Committee members—has been another controversial issue of the Mujib regime. Many of the collaborators were indiscriminately killed and tortured in the immediate aftermath of the war. A sizable number of them instantly turned themselves into "freedom fighters" with the help of powerful friends and relatives, or by purchasing freedom fighter certificates from the bursting black market. No wonder, even after four decades of the liberation war, the country still does not have a credible list of its freedom fighters.

Within couple of months of the liberation of the country, the Mujib regime, however, framed a law—the Bangladesh Collaborators (Special Tribunals) Order, 1972—to bring the collaborators to justice. The law allowed the government to arrest without warrant those who helped Pakistani occupation forces "by words, signs or conduct," and sanctioned three years imprisonment to death sentence and confiscation of properties for such offenses and crimes. Subsequently, an amendment to the law provided that nonavailability of postmortem report or dead body could not disallow prosecution, and unless evidence to the contrary was available, documents in the possession of the prosecution would be admissible evidence. The law denied the right to appeal to those accused or indicted, but granted prosecutors the right to appeal an order of acquittal.

The exact number of collaborators arrested or prosecuted during the Mujib regime remains uncertain, but available reports suggest that 41,800 people were arrested in 37,471 cases, of which 2,848 were dismissed by October, 1972, when the regime abandoned the trial of collaborators altogether. The trials resulted in jail sentences of various lengths for 752 persons, but only one person was sentenced to death. As discussed previously, the trial processes were fraught

with corruption and incompetence, often based on shoddy evidence and often the judges themselves were collaborators. Eventually, on December 16, 1973, Mujib granted full amnesty to all collaborators—convicted, detained, or jailed. Apparently, Mujib sought to stem rising belief that the trials of collaborators were instigated by neighboring India to discredit pro-Islamic and anti-Indian elements in the country.

The regime also sought to prosecute the Pakistani POWs. On January 29, 1972, the regime set up two separate tribunals—one for the trial of persons accused of genocide, and another for the trial of other war criminals—and appointed prosecutors for the trial. Also, in July, 1973, the constitution was amended to set up an International Crimes Tribunal for the trial of the POWs. Ultimately, however, the regime abandoned the idea of prosecuting Pakistani POWs in April, 1974, by agreeing to Pakistan's demand for unconditional release of all its POWs in exchange of securing Pakistan's recognition.

In early 2009, four decades after the nation's independence, the Sheikh Hasina government revived the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, which authorized trials of war crimes committed in 1971. As Pakistani POWs remained out of the reach of Bangladesh, the Hasina government focused its attention on domestic collaborators—the Razakars, Al-Badrs, Al-Shams, and Peace Committee members. In July, 2009, the 1973 Act was updated granting prosecutors the right to file appeals with the Supreme Court if the tribunal ruled for acquittal of an accused. On March 25, 2010, the Hasina government appointed a three-member tribunal, a seven-member investigation agency, and a 12-member prosecution team to hold the trials according to the amended act. The tribunal was headed by Mohammed Nizamul Huq, while A. T. M. Fazle Kabir and A. K. M. Zahir Ahmed served as members.

The prosecution was mainly directed at the Jamaat-e-Islami—the largest fundamentalist Muslim party in Bangladesh—which cooperated with Pakistani occupation forces in 1971. By 2012, nine leaders of the party, and two leaders of the BNP were indicted for war crimes. The Jamaat leaders included Ghulam Azam, the party's main ideologue who was also the chief of the party in 1971; incumbent chief of the party Matiur Rahman Nizami; deputy chief of the party Delwar Hossain Sayeedi; secretary general of the party Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid; two assistant secretary generals of the party Muhammad Kamruzzaman and Abdul Quader Molla; a Jamaat media magnet Mir Kashem Ali; and two Islamic clerics associated with the party Miah Golam Parwar and Abdul Kalam Azad (Bachchu). The two BNP leaders indicted were Salahuddin

Quader Chowdhury and Abdul Alim.

As of May, 2015, the International Crimes Tribunal issued 22 verdicts awarding death sentence to almost all of the indicted suspects. The first verdict of the tribunal was given in January 2013, when Abul Kalam Azad (Bachchu) was awarded death sentence in a trial in his absence. The accused still remains at large. In February 2013, Abdul Quader Molla was awarded life imprisonment, but following the street demonstrations and the government's appeal, the Supreme Court sentenced him to death. Molla, the first to be put to death for war crimes in Bangladesh, was executed on December 12, 2013. On May 9, 2013, Kamruzzman received death sentence, and he was executed in April, 2015.

Ghulam Azam was sentenced to 90 years prison term on July 15, 2013, but he died of a heart stroke in prison on October 23, 2014. Ali Ahsan Mojaheed was sentenced to death on July 17, 2013, and executed in November, 2015. On November 3, 2013, Chowdhury Mueen-Uddin, an Al-Badr leader, was given death sentence. He was tried in absentia and still remains absconding. On September 17, 2014, Delwar Hossain Sayedee was sentenced to death, but his sentence was commuted to imprisonment until death by the Supreme Court. On October 29, 2014, Motiur Rahman Nizami was sentenced to death, and on May 11, 2016, he was executed after the Supreme Court denied his appeal against the death sentence. On November 2, 2014, Mir Quasem Ali was sentenced to death —the Supreme Court denied his appeal in March, 2016. Of the two BNP leaders accused of collaboration—Abdul Alim received death sentence but he died during his appeal with the Supreme Court, and Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was hanged in November, 2015.

The trial of collaborators, after more than 40 years of alleged crimes, and almost guaranteed death sentences and executions to all indicted and convicted, drew widespread criticisms both at home and abroad. The trial procedures, especially rights of the accused for proper and unfettered defense, judgments based on long lost and shoddy evidence and questionable witnesses, were questioned by many human rights organizations, including the US-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and the parliamentary bodies of the European Union (EU). The Brussels-based International Crisis Group, for example, noted, "Critics question the tribunal's independence, citing its creation of its own rules of procedure that cannot be challenged before the Supreme Court. They also cite the government's efforts to stifle criticism of the tribunal and failure to respect the presumption of innocence, with ministers making statements assuming the defendant's guilt"

(cited in Silva 2013, 65).

Also, on the occasion of the nation's third Victory Day, on December 16, 1973, Mujib, granted full amnesty to all domestic collaborators—irrespective of any charges, conviction or prison terms. Following that amnesty, and following restoration of religion-based politics by the Zia regime, many collaborators became full participants in civic and political life of the country for several decades. Some of them were elected members of parliament; they even came to occupy ministerial positions of the government. The war crime trials obviously set the clock backward for national reconciliation and cohesiveness—by tapping into the anger of some segments of the population. An overwhelming majority of the country's current population was born after the liberation war, and to most of them the atrocities and crimes of the collaborators are matters of history book. Obviously, the Hasina government not only stampeded Mujib's amnesty for all domestic collaborators, but also reinvigorated those well-forgotten wounds and renewed controversy and division among the masses.

IX. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mark Twain reminded us that one must judge a renowned man by the standards of his own time. Mujib (1920–75) was just 55 years old when assassin's bullet brought down the towering figure. During such a short span of life, Mujib raised himself to the pinnacle of glory—he led one of the most successful secessionist movements in the postcolonial era, materialized his people's perennial search for a distinct nationhood, and secured a place for himself and his nation in world history—these are not trivial accomplishments.

At the same time, Mujib's life and time had its share of trials and tribulations, triumphs and tragedies. It was he who readied his people for freedom, but when it came to lead the liberation war, he chose to abdicate it. He fought for democracy and human rights throughout the period before the liberation of the country, often clearly risking his own life, then when it came to deliver democracy and human rights on his own, he failed miserably—literally ended up with a totalitarian regime under his absolute control.

Mujib had some historical successes in governing his country—he framed a new constitution, returned Indian troops back home, secured recognition from international community, and obtained record amount of foreign aid to salvage the nation in the immediate aftermath of the liberation war—much of which could be much more problematic had he not been at the helm of the nation. But

his checkered regime that lasted just three and a-half years was also tarnished by his abysmal failures in recovering arms from freedom fighters, stopping unbridled atrocities of the Rakkhi Bahini, and granting freedom and fundamental human rights to his people.

In the economic sphere, Mujib's ideological vacillations between petty bourgeoisie inclinations and socialist orientations cost one of the poorest nations in the world very dearly. His economic measures aimed at socialization of agriculture and nationalization of industries for capital accumulation resulted in gross economic mismanagement and widespread looting and plundering of public properties. Both agricultural and industrial outputs plummeted, inflation soared, and most importantly, his regime failed to deliver food to starving millions during the devastating famine of 1974. Worse still, nobody still knows the exact death toll of the famine that literally wiped out all euphoria of the just-earned independence. Corruption was the hallmark of the regime from the beginning to the end—the nation had never experienced such a level and magnitude of unrestrained bribery, cronyism, political patronage, favoritism, or nepotism ever before.[18]

The worst of the regime, however, came with the launching of the one-party-one-man monolithic rule under BAKSAL in January 1975, which not only bulldozed the last vestiges of democracy in the country, but also left no practical recourse to get rid of the dictatorship without getting rid of Mujib himself. Another far-reaching legacy of the regime must be compulsory introduction of *Bangla* language and banning of English language at all levels of education and governmental business, which has very definitively moved the country backward over the decades. At the end, to paraphrase Thomas Hobbes's words, the "nasty, short and brutish" Mujib regime succumbed to the barrels of guns as ordinary people, who fondly called him *Bangabandhu* (friend of Bengal), had no voice in their own governance.

NOTES

1. Simon Dring described his conversation with Mujib as follows:

At around 1:10 a.m. on March 26: one tank, an armored car and trucks loaded with troops drove down the street firing over his house. "Sheikh you should come down," an officer called out in English as they stopped outside. Mujibar stepped out onto his balcony and said, "Yes, I am ready, but there is no need to fire. All you need to have done is call me on the telephone and I would have come." The officer then walked into the yard and told Mujibar, "You are arrested" (Washington Post March 30, 1971; Singh *et al.* 1999, 346).

2. As mentioned before, Yahya appointed Tikka Khan as governor of East Pakistan on March 6, 1971,

but his official swearing was delayed until April 5 as chief justice of East Pakistan refused to administer oath of office to him.

3. Mujib maintained good relations with the United States for a long time, dating back to 1950s, when his mentor Suhrawardy maintained pro-American stance, while Moulana Bhashani had to break away from the Awami Muslim League due to his pro-Chinese stance. Archer Blood (2002), who served as American consul general in Dhaka in 1970–71, maintains that Mujib had been in touch with the American Consulate on a regular basis since the 1970 general elections, and especially throughout the period of tripartite negotiations in March, 1971. According to Blood (2002, 51), in a meeting with American ambassador in Dhaka, J. Farland in February 1971, Mujib refused to accept Bhutto as foreign minister of his anticipated cabinet because of his "love for Communist China."

4. The interview was telecasted from WNEW-TV, New York, on January 18, 1972. Also see Singh *et al.* (2002, 615).

5. That Mujib had plenty of time on March 25, 1971 to realize that the negotiation had failed, that Yahya Khan left Dhaka in the early evening without intimating him, and that a Pakistani military crackdown was all but imminent, can hardly be disputed. Mian (2000, 84) claims that Mujib told him on the night of March 25, 1971, that he came to know from several sources that Yahya left Dhaka at 5 p.m.

6. That's how Mervyn Jones described Mujib in "Weep for Bengal," *New Statesman*, London, April 2, 1971.

7. Ludden (2003) puts it succinctly: "Ever since, the question of who declared independence has been trapped in partisan agendas that demand a choice between two dates, two declarations, and two authors, each associated, respectively, with one of two political parties, each of which reveres one of these two men as its founding father."

8. According to Umar (2004), Hannan himself, however, claimed that one Rakhal Chandra Banik of Chittagong Radio Station and some Awami League parliamentary members helped him in preparing and broadcasting the message.

9. By then Major Zia already came to limelight by resisting unloading of military equipment from a Pakistani vessel named *Swat* at the Chittagong port on March 23, 1971. See *Dainik Bangla* (March 26, 1972) and Muhith (1992, 225–226).

10. Apparently, in his first announcement Zia inadvertently declared himself as the head of the state "due to the tension and excitement of the moment," and then in his subsequent announcement he cleared up the air as M. R. Siddiqui insisted that his first announcement could "jeopardize the political character of the movement" as the liberation war might be construed as a "military uprising and not as an uprising by the people" (Islam 1981, 105). Also see *Dainik Bangla* (March 26, 1972) and Muhith (1992, 225–226).

11. Also, during the liberation war thousands of women were raped by the Pakistani occupation forces, but the exact number of rapes or rape victims was never established with any semblance of accuracy. In several of his speeches, Mujib put the figure at 200,000, which also seem to be overblown (Dowlah 2009, 128).

12. Evidently, many secessionist movements in former colonial countries, including Biafrans in Nigeria, Katangees in the Republic of Congo, Naga in India, Kurds in Iraq, Pathans in Pakistan, Tamils in Sri Lanka, and Kachins or Shans in Myanmar, ended up in abysmal failure. See Isaacs (1975) and Islam (1985).

13. Ethnically, they are of Sino-Tibetan descent belonging to Mongolian group and closely resemble the people of northwest India, Myanmar, and Thailand. Religiously, majority of them are Buddhists, although there are small sections of Christians, Hindus, and animists as well (Ahsan and Chakma 1989, 961; Dowlah 2014).

14. The bahini was created by the Jatiyo Rakkhi Bahini Act, 1972, promulgated by the Mujib regime on February 8, 1972. It was deployed next month, immediately after the Indian forces left Bangladesh.

15. The Rakkhi Bahini was created under the supervision of Major General Sujan Singh Uban of Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and was trained in Savar camp by Indian military officer Major Bala Reddy (Hassan 1972).

16. Perhaps one of the darkest episodes in the history of the Rakkhi Bahini would be the arrest and killing

of Siraj Sikdar—an underground radical left politician—who founded the Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party and vehemently opposed Mujib for surrendering to “Indian expansionism.” He was arrested on January 1, 1975, from Hali Shahr of Chittagong, within couple of days of the declaration of emergency by Mujib. Then, he was brought to Dhaka by air, but on January 2, 1975, he was declared dead in an alleged “crossfire” on his way to Savar camp of the Rakkhi Bahini. See Azmi (2016).

17. Even the high-ranking military officials, such as Major General Zia, Brigadier Khaled Mossarraf, and others, who were not directly involved in the military coup, lent support to the military coup when the assassination of Mujib failed to generate widespread mass opposition (Khan 1976, 123).

18. Almost any study of the regime agrees that corruption reigned supreme during the Mujib regime. Here is how one observer puts it: “The regime, which started out with the emotional support of virtually every man, woman and child in the nation and the financial backing of dozens of sympathetic foreign governments, soon foundered. Mujib himself was sucked into a quagmire of corruption. Not knowing how to get free, he destroyed democracy and instituted a reign of terror, which, in turn, encouraged antigovernment terrorist activities” (Tayeeb 1978, 170).

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About the Author

Caf Dowlah, a professor of economics with the City University of New York, hailed from Bangladesh. All through a brilliant student—he stood either first or second in order of merit in all public examinations in Bangladesh before coming to the University of Southern California for higher education in 1985. At USC, he earned two masters degrees (in Public Administration and Economics) and a PhD in international political economy by 1990. Dr. Dowlah started his academic career in the United States as an assistant professor of economics and government with the State University of New York in 1991. Over the years, he taught at several universities in the United States, Japan, and Bangladesh. He also worked for the World Bank, the UN Development Program, UN World Food Program, and US Agency for International Development in consulting and policy-advisory capacities. Dr Dowlah authored several books—his last book titled *International Trade, Competitive Advantage and Developing Economies—How Less Developed Countries Are Capturing Global Markets*, was published in 2016 by Routledge (New York). He has published with many refereed journals, including, the *World Economy*, *Asia-Pacific Development Journal*, *International Journal of Social Welfare*, *International Journal of Social Economics*, *Journal of Economic Issues*, *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, *Bangladesh Development Studies*, *Law and Development Review*, *Finance & Development*, and *Journal of International Trade Law and Policy*. He also wrote columns/commentaries for Dhaka-based the *Daily Star* and the *Financial Express*, the *Japan Times* (Tokyo) and the *Economist Intelligence Unit* (London).